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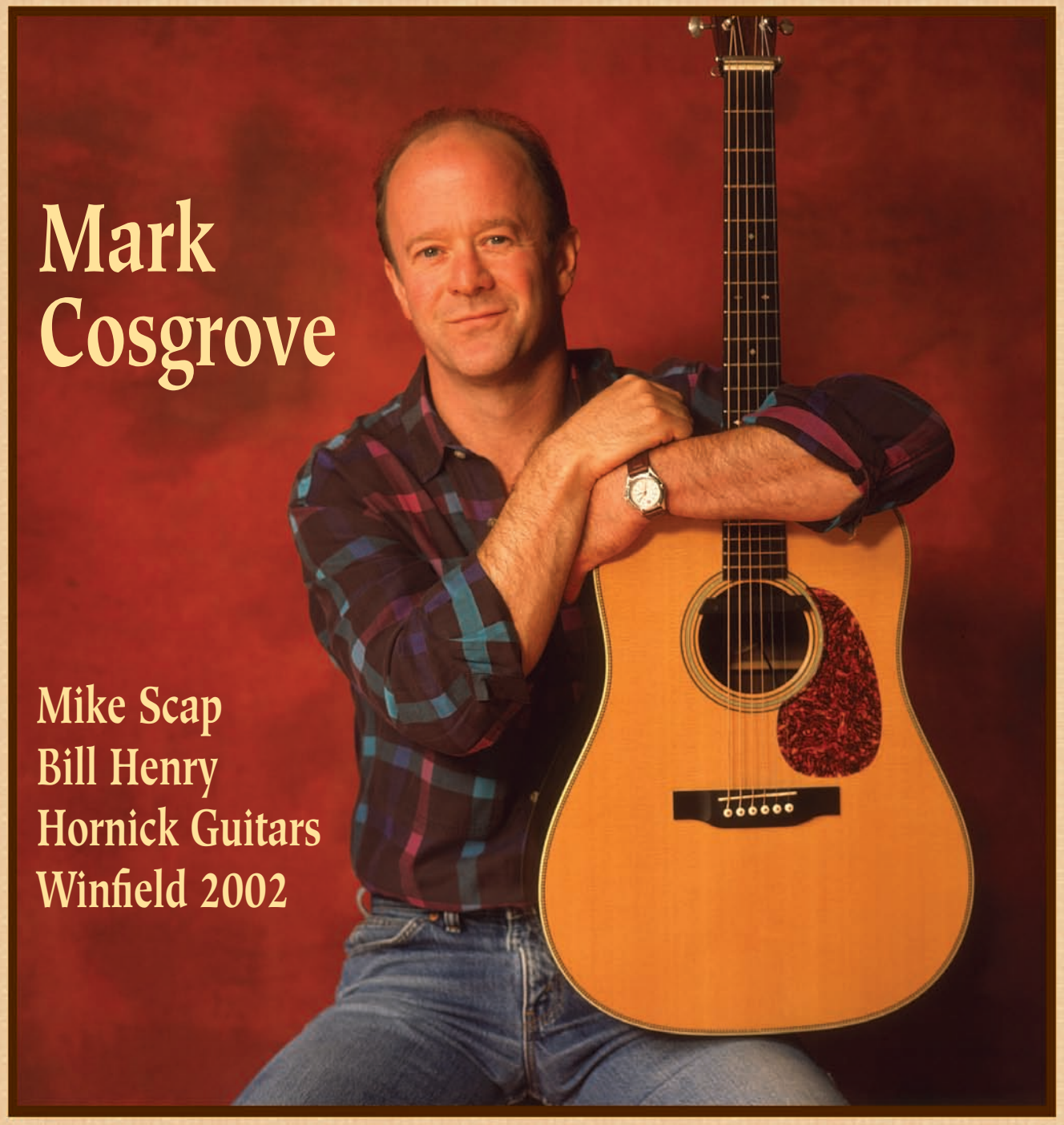

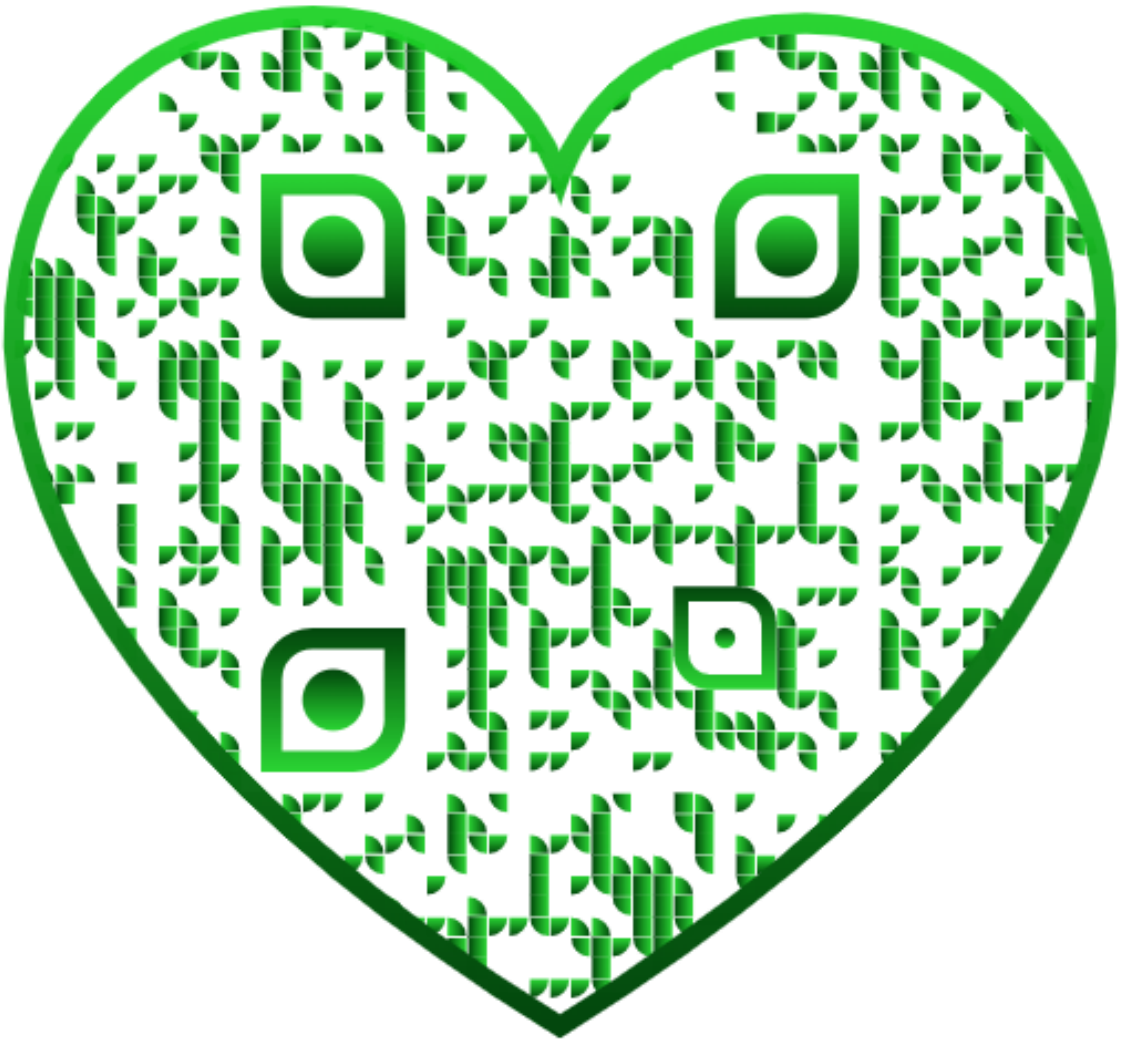

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How to Duplicate & Promote an Acoustic CD Release

1. **Send your music to radio.** No matter how you define your goals, you need to get your music to folk radio. One excellent way to do this is through a **radio-oriented sampler CD program**, such as the OASISACOUSTIC™ sampler CDs, which get the music of Oasis clients to hundreds of key radio stations throughout the U.S.

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EDITOR'S PAGE

Winfield 2002

Another great Walnut Valley Festival is behind us and we want to send congratulations to Scott Fore of Radford, Virginia, for his well deserved win at this year's event. As always, we had a great time at Winfield and I want to say "thanks" to all of the pickers who came by and visited with us at our booth.

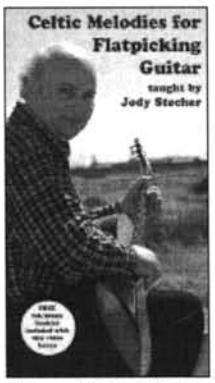
The competition this year was as tough as ever, with five former champions (with two of those being 2-time former champions) in the contest. If you have never taken the trip to Winfield, consider coming out next year. As David Dugas points out in his article about this year's event (see page 67) the contest is really just a small part of the whole Winfield experience.

Gary Cook attended the Walnut Valley Festival this year and we got an update from him regarding life after the big fire that destroyed his home. The Cooks are getting ready to rebuild a new home on the same lot and are in very good spirits considering what they have been through. The Mel Bay transcription book which we mentioned in the last issue should be available soon. All of the transcriptions are in and I'm getting ready to send the completed project to Bill Bay for printing. I saw Bill at Winfield and he said that he would put the project up at the front of his list. Hopefully by the time the next issue comes out I will be able to announce that the book is available.

Robin Kessinger and Rob Pearcy give the 2002 National Flatpicking Gutiar Champion Scott Fore "two picks up"

Bluegrass Lead Guitar
taught by Scott Nygaard

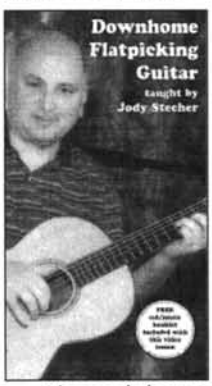
In this video, renowned guitarist Scott Nygaard guides you through the old-time fiddle tune *Little Billy Wilson*, a crosspicking arrangement of *Home Sweet Home*, a melodic solo on the blues song *Trouble in Mind* and shows you how to combine these influences when creating a solo on a bluegrass tune like *East Virginia Blues*. Scott explains in detail the techniques needed to master the bluegrass lead guitar style and the ideas behind his arrangements. All are clearly illustrated in split-screen close-ups. ***GW604 $29.95***



Celtic Melodies for Flatpicking Guitar
taught by Jody Stecher

The colorful tones of the guitar are well suited to the music of Ireland and Scotland. Jody Stecher has developed a unique approach to flatpicking Celtic music drawing on the sounds and techniques of the harp, fiddle and pipes. This video lesson presents a graded course starting with simpler fingering with special attention to picking techniques. Building on a base of a confident and deliberate right hand, more challenging left hand work is gradually introduced.

Titles include: ***Reel*** *Sheehan's Reel •* ***Jig*** *The Connaughtman's Rambles •* ***March*** *A Trip To Mabou Ridge •* ***Strathspey*** *The Devil In The Kitchen •* ***Reel*** *Muilleann Dubh •* ***Reel*** *Doctor Gilbert* ***GW605 $29.95***



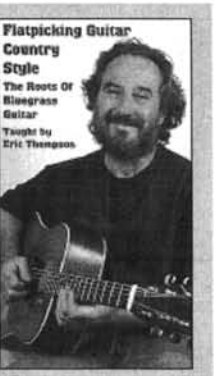
Downhome Flatpicking Guitar
taught by Jody Stecher

Jody Stecher has long been America's least generic flatpicker. This video is both a roadmap of Jody's development as a flatpicking guitarist of mostly American vernacular music, and a guide to how any flatpicker can expand their expressive technique. Think of it as *"Flatpicking According to Jody"*.

It's a graded course starting with basics in which the technical relationship between fingerpicking and flatpicking is made clear. The first few pieces are great songs with memorable melodies but minimal fingering so that right hand fundamentals can be mastered. With each new tune more techniques are introduced and more and more fingerboard is used, both horizontally and vertically. The second half of the video is purely instrumental music and the tunes are more complex.

Titles include: Carter's Blues, It's Hard To Love, I Got A Bulldog, Leake County Blues, Arkansas Traveler, The Dawn and The Ship in Full Sail ***GW606 $29.95***

Flatpicking Guitar Country Style
The Roots of Bluegrass Guitar
Taught by Eric Thompson



Eric Thompson will have you flatpicking lead breaks in styles from Maybelle Carter to Doc Watson. You'll learn to pick out the melody to songs like *East Virginia Blues, Sad and Lonesome Day* and *Shady Grove*. You will learn to embellish your playing with "hammer-ons" and "pull-offs" for the real old-time country sound. You'll build a solid technique, advancing step-by-step through single note arrangements of *Thompson's Rag*, fiddle hoedowns *Arkansas Traveler* and *Soldier's Joy*, and a bluesy bluegrass break for *Good Old Mountain Dew* (employing slippery slides and hot runs). Eric's invaluable tips on left hand fingering and right hand pick technique are clearly illustrated in split-screen close-ups.
GW 601 $29.95

Flatpicking Fiddle Tunes
Reels, Rags & Hoedowns
Taught by Eric Thompson

Old-time fiddle tunes are the bedrock upon which acoustic guitar flatpicking is built. Eric Thompson's strong, melodic picking has set a benchmark for taste and tone for nearly four decades. In this video Eric shares soulful arrangements of seven of his favorites, guiding you slowly, line-by-line through classics like *Texas Gals, Fish In The Millpond,* Scottish-Irish rooted *Miller's Reel* and *Stony Point,* mountain modal *Falls of Richmond,* swingin' *Kennedy Rag* and the bouncy *East Tennessee Blues.* You'll build your repertoire and hone your technique, exploring fingering patterns in six different keys which are all clearly illustrated in split-screen close-ups. ***GW 602 $29.95***

Bluegrass Crosspicking Guitar
Taught by Eric Thompson

Crosspicking is an exciting flatpicking technique that is an essential part of every bluegrass guitarist's arsenal. Utilizing repeated patterns on three-string groups, crosspicking captures the bounce of a fiddler's double shuffle and the drive of three-finger banjo Scruggs-style rolls. Eric Thompson lays it out for you in easy to understand steps, illustrating the basic patterns with arrangements of *Fly Around My Pretty Little Miss, Blackberry Rag, Beaumont Rag, Wildwood Flower,* and *Cross-eyed Fiddler.* Split-screen close-ups let you see exactly what and how Eric is playing. ***GW 603 $29.95***

Beginner's Country Guitar
taught by Fred Sokolow

All you need to put over a good country song is your voice and a guitar. This video lesson gives you the tools you need to play old-fashioned country, honky-tonk and country rock. You'll learn how to play: Accompaniment strums for different rhythmic feels; a variety of first-position chords; bass runs; major scales; solos and turnarounds. . *Tunes include: Blue Eyes Crying In The Rain, I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry, The Bottle Let Me Down, I'm Movin' On, Will The Circle Be Unbroken, Silver Wings and Jambalaya,* ***GW407 $29.95***

Flatpicking Country Classics
taught by Fred Sokolow

In this 75 minute video Fred teaches nine standards every country picker/singer should know... from start to finish. You'll learn an intro for each song, a backup pattern and bass runs to play while singing, an instrumental solo, and an ending. Picking up where his *BEGINNER'S COUNTRY GUITAR* video left off, Fred keeps the arrangements fairly simple but includes a few up-the-neck chord positions and hot licks. You'll learn solos and runs in five different keys. Each song is played at regular speed and then slowed down on a split-screen that gives you a close-up look at the picking hand and the chording hand.

Tunes include: New San Antonio Rose, Wild Side of Life, Waltz Across Texas, The Race is On, Beautiful Kentucky Waltz, That's the Way Love Goes, I Don't Hurt Anymore, Someone I Used To Know and City of New Orleans ***GW410 $29.95***

Basic Country Flatpicking Guitar
taught by Dix Bruce

Hot guitar licks abound these days but simple melodies played along with chord strums on the low strings of the guitar have never lost their appeal. Pioneered in the 1920s by the great Mother Maybelle Carter, this combination of lead and rhythm guitar playing is the foundation upon which all traditional country, folk, bluegrass, and hot flatpicking guitar is based. In this video lesson Dix Bruce carefully teaches lead and backup guitar to nine great and classic country, bluegrass, and folk standards, ballads and hot breakdowns played by musicians the world over.

Tunes include: Worried Man Blues, Lonesome Valley, Storms Are On the Ocean, Handsome Molly, Wildwood Flower, Redwing, John Hardy, Jimmie Brown the Newsboy ***GW308 $29.95***

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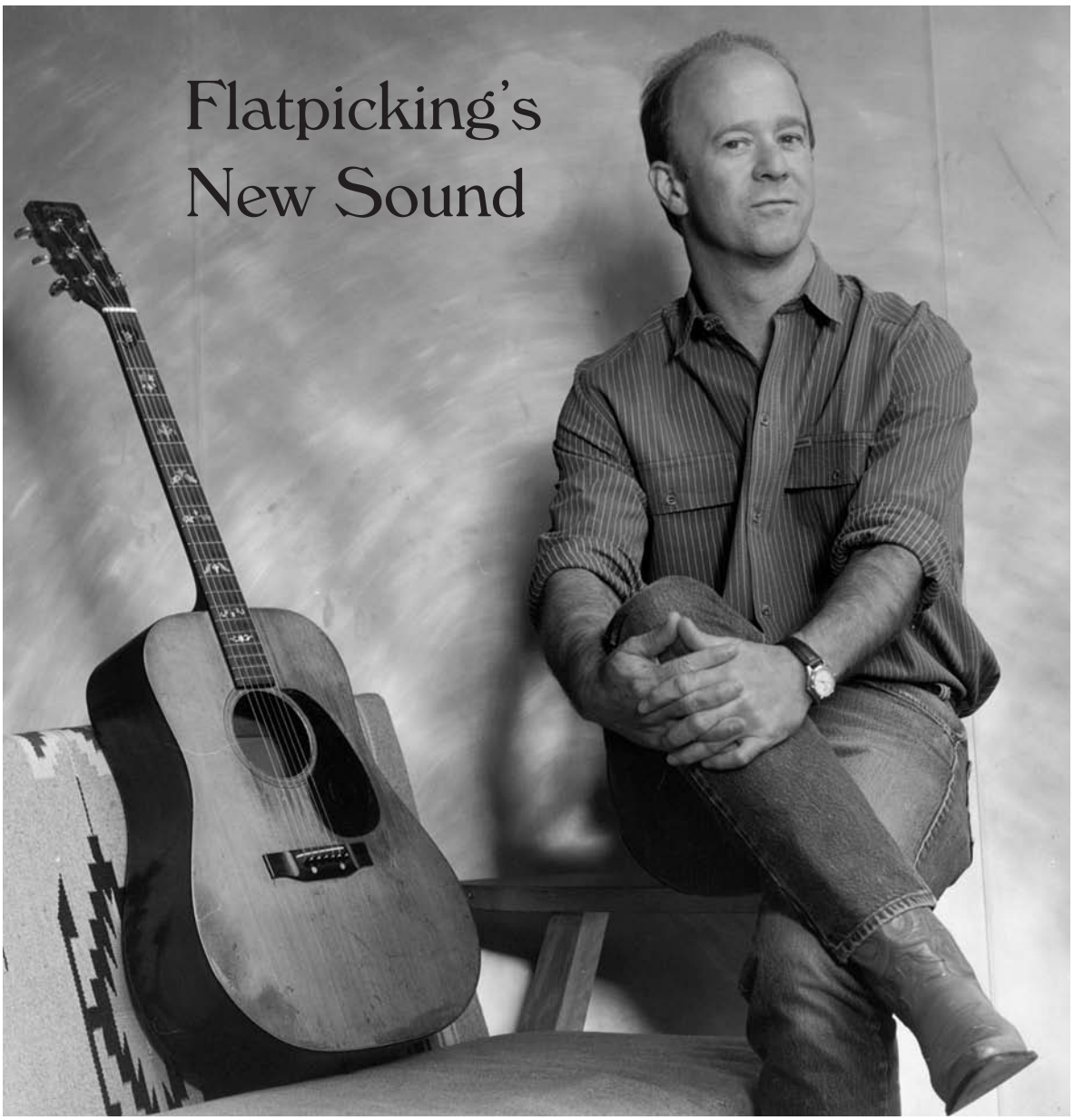
Mark Cosgrove



In 1995, an important new sound entered flatpicking. Mark Cosgrove's Winfield-winning performance. A heady blend of passionate, precision crosspicking, harmonically intriguing open string "floating" licks, and rhythmically inventive single-note lines filled with bluesy bends, surgically clean triplets, growling slurs and slick double stops, instantly established him as one of the emerging voices on acoustic guitar that would lead flatpicking into the future. Driven by a powerhouse right-hand attack that seemed to wring notes from the very bottom of his guitar's tonal well, Mark delivered intensely lyrical, exciting and creative flatpicking arrangements of tunes like "Bye Bye Blues" and "Alabama Jubilee" in a way that made these contest standards sound totally fresh and unique. No one who heard his performances that day at Winfield or who heard those contest tunes on his subsequent CD releases doubted that an important new artist had emerged on the flatpicking scene.

Warm, likeable and perceptive, with an uncanny ability to expertly blend his guitar into most musical situations, Mark quickly caught on as a favorite of fans and fellow musicians alike. He began appearing as an instructor at major music workshops and clinics such as Steve Kaufman's annual Flatpicking Kamp. He and fellow national guitar champion Rolly Brown are also organizing their own weekend-long guitarfest featuring workshops, private lessons, and a concert with John Carlini, David Grier and, at last year's show, Stephen Bennett.

Mel Bay Publications released a transcription book of his first CD *Good*

Written by David McCarty

Medicine" a project that has recently been updated and re-released. In addition to his solo CDs *Good Medicine* and *Round Island*, he's recorded an outstanding album of flatpicking duets with Richard Starkey of C.F. Martin fame. Maybe his most important connection is his longtime association with Liz Meyer, an American expatriate living in Amsterdam whose soaring contralto voice and often-brilliant songwriting has earned her a respected place in Europe's burgeoning acoustic music scene. Mark and Liz tour Europe twice a year and have just completed a superb CD of Liz's original songs, backed by such Nashville superstars as Stuart Duncan, Sam Bush, Bela Fleck, Ron Block and others.

Today, Mark Cosgrove's distinctive, creative flatpicking sound is known and respected on both sides of the Atlantic, and it seems like he's just getting started. Not bad for someone who grew up in a Manhattan apartment surrounded by classical music and whose original musical ambition was to become a drummer.

"My first instrument was guitar, but I started playing drums when I was 10 or 11. I learned from records and played in school bands," he says. "I still love to play the drums. I'm not a good drummer, but I'm adequate. I think it helped me have a halfway decent sense of time and feel for music. In this genre, I believe that feel and groove are essential."

Cultural exposure in Mark's home was distinctly highbrow. His mother Mary was a successful costume and set designer for major Broadway plays and the opera, winning a Tony Award for her work in 1948. "My household was always full of friends of my parents who were involved in music and theater. None of my immediate family members are musicians, and getting established as a musician myself, people assume there was a lot of bluegrass and acoustic music in my household, but there really wasn't," he relates. "My parents and family loved classical music, and still to this day don't entirely get the music I am so involved in and have made my life's work."

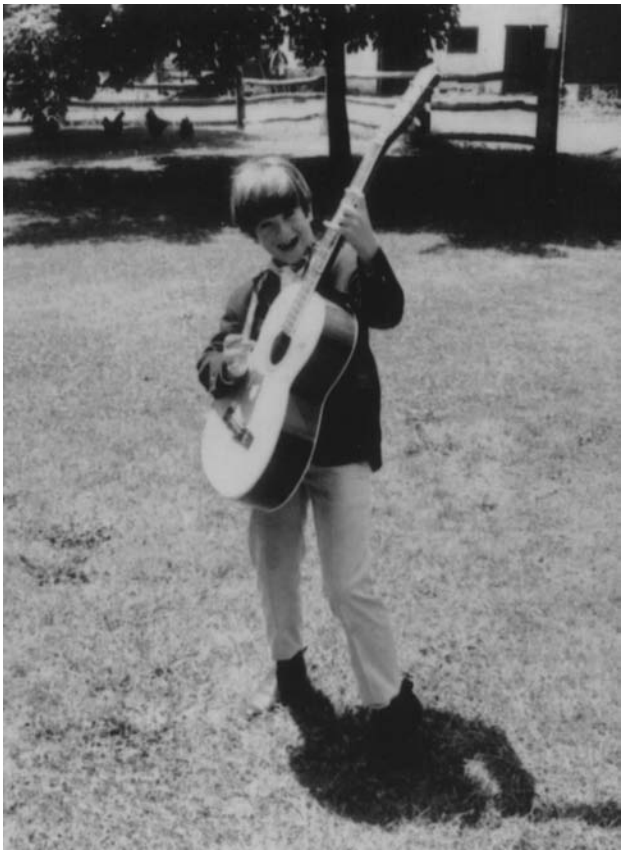
After flirting with drums, Mark returned to guitar when he was about 15 as he met high school mates who were into bluegrass and folk music, as well as acoustic-flavored rock acts like CSN&Y. A ninth-grade math teacher who played fiddle encouraged him, as well. But it wasn't until he heard the glorious wail of Clarence White on the Byrds' *Untitled* album that the guitar really took hold of him. "That knocked me out, when I took a look at the layers of what Clarence White was doing," he explains. Around the same time, Mark heard Doc Watson and the famous *Will the Circle Be Unbroken* album and made the connection that Doc and Clarence both were flatpicking the acoustic guitar. "I guess I was hooked and have been ever since," Mark says now.

Mark studiously pursued flatpicking, and spent a summer sanding guitar bodies for guitarmaker Augustine LoPrinzi. The shop had a Brazilian rosewood dreadnought on the wall that was considered a second. Despite his boss's reluctance to sell anything considered less than the shop's best work, Mark persuaded his boss to let him buy the guitar for $100. "I used that guitar to win both Winfield and the Doc Watson championships. I really treasure it," he says.

In addition to playing acoustic, Mark also enjoyed playing electric guitar, an early musical experience that shows a profound impact in how he approaches his flatpicking style. By the time he was 18, Mark had joined a local swing country band called Cross Country that covered everything from Western Swing stylists like Commander Cody and his Lost Planet Airmen and Asleep at the Wheel to the New Orleans-based Dixie funk rock of Little Feat. "I was and still am a huge fan of Lowell George [Little Feats founder]. I loved his phrasing both as a guitarist and a vocalist" Mark explains. The band played professionally around the Philadelphia area, giving him valuable exposure to the world of being a professional musician. Hungry for musical growth, he absorbed country-rock licks and chicken pickin' style Telecaster leads from masters such as Ray Flacke, Albert Lee, and James Burton, all the while continuing to soak up influences from Clarence White's astounding breakthroughs on both acoustic and electric guitar. It all went into Mark's musical upbringing, creating a daring and original style that wouldn't become fully realized until he started playing acoustic guitar fulltime in the mid-80s.

His first chance to do that came when he joined a Philly-based bluegrass band called the Lewis Brothers, which as Mark recalls, "didn't have a single person named Lewis or a single brother in it." The band released two LPs and toured Europe, where he met future partner Liz Meyer. Working with a straight-up bluegrass band helped Mark hone his acoustic chops, but the demands of his day job as a carpenter kept him from progressing as much as he wanted. Eventually, Mark and his wife bought a natural foods store, selling everything from organic produce to supplements. "That afforded me time to play more guitar and, in a physical way, I wasn't as exhausted as I had been doing contracting work," he recalls. "I could concentrate really hard on my playing and did some major improving then."

Before long, he felt good enough to tackle the challenging guitar competition circuit. Making his first pilgrimage to Winfield in 1987, he entered his very first guitar competition at the National Flatpicking Guitar Championships. "I didn't make the



A nine year old Mark Cosgrove—already going up-the-neck

Mark (second from right) with a country rock band, the Yips, 1978

cut and I sort of sucked actually," he admits freely. But he gained valuable experience and insight. "One thing that contributed to my sucking so bad was that I hadn't prepared. I could improvise pretty well, and I had the outlines of my tunes down and thought I could just blow over the changes and be relaxed. I had no idea of the level of competition out there," he tells FGM. "I spent the next eight years pondering how to go about that stuff and have more success."

With his new job, Mark could devote many more hours to developing and practicing contest arrangements. Diligently, he worked on his tunes and developed his musicianship to a higher level. By 1994, he felt ready to take another crack at the big time, heading to Merlefest for the flatpicking contest there. "I just wanted to get more experience; I had no concept that I might win," he says, adding that, "I got very lucky that day."

Buoyed by his success in North Carolina, Mark returned to Winfield in 1994 and came home with a solid second-place finish, losing to Mike Whitehead and beating Kenny Smith. "Great company," he says with a smile now. That year at Winfield, Mark cracked the inner circle of top pickers, joining jams with two-time champ Gary Cook, the Kessingers, and Steve Kaufman. "During my time away from contests, I looked at Steve's real genius for arrangement and creating strong competition pieces," he says of three-time winner and contest legend Kaufman. "He's a very special player."

Like most musicians, winning the Big W didn't dramatically change Mark's career or open numerous doors that had previously been closed to him. But the credibility and legitimacy afforded by his victory certainly helped him move to the next level and made many important connections for him. He's noticeably increased his visibility at workshops and clinics, and appeared on Mel Bay's recent *Winfield Winners* video. In addition to touring Europe, Mark and Liz Meyer have begun appearing together in the U.S. and were showcased on the Roots & Branches stage at IBMA, where Mark also participated in the guitar workshop. His revised Mel Bay book, now titled *Hot Solos for Flatpicking Guitar*, was out by Winfield, and he has a new solo CD in the planning stages. There's even a CD of Christmas music on the drawing board for 2003. Splitting his time between working at the store, teaching, touring and recording, Mark Cosgrove has found a way to make a good living while elevating the level of flatpicking guitar to an exciting new state.

Tell us more about your contest preparation and any suggestions you have for people trying to do well?

For me, I felt there were a few basic ingredients required. You need to be able to play real strong continuous 16th notes without fatiguing and you should be able to crosspick well, including some trick playing like floating. But it's also important to just get a real good feel and a good sense of the melody and make sure the judges hear that right away. Let them know you know what tune you're playing, and that you're not just riffing over changes. Hearing Steve Bennett in 1987 play his "Greased Pig" and winning Winfield with that arrangement made an impression on me. The players that stand out don't play the same old same old; they have a different voice. I had rock and Tele influences in my playing, so I sounded different, I guess, from the average "Bill Cheatum" flatpicker. Try to come up with your own voice a little bit. There's no time limit at Winfield except a loose three minutes, and that's a long time to fit a lot of stuff in there, so throw in everything but the kitchen sink, as SK would say.

Your right hand is amazing, unlike anything else I've heard in flatpicking. Was that a goal to develop such power and clarity and drive in your playing, something you specifically sought out?

My acoustic playing is the antithesis of my electric playing. I developed a strong attack from trying to be heard over banjos and fiddles. I was a quiet player just trying to be heard and making sure I could play on top of a racket was the main thing that contributed to my right hand technique. When I need to dig in and be accurate and loud and reach the loud end of my dynamic range, I float the ring and pinky fingers on the pickguard. Most of the power is a result of finding a way to be heard in a jam situation or when playing with less experienced musicians. It's really hard to be heard on the guitar in a crowd.

One quality that sets you apart from a lot of players is your tone production. You get a huge sound that is highly musical. What goes into that?

I fooled around with my tone and pick shape and attack quite a bit, especially in the last five years. I've experimented with turning the pick slightly at an angle and leading with the edge to try to get a rounder sound. I do not like the clacky pick noise people often get when they really dig in. So I experimented, and it means a lot to me to have people say I get decent tone. I have tremendous respect for players like David Grier or Brian Sutton; those guys have a tone I like. I try my best to improve my own sound. To be loud with tone, one of the most important things is to realize your dynamic range, what's the loudest

and softest you can play and get decent tone, and how to use your sound to create interest and make your solo effective and allow it to breathe a little and avoid the typewriter effect, which can make this music a little wearisome at times.

Where do you fall in the great cross-picking technique debate? D-U-D or D-D-U? Or do you vary from one style to another?

The difference between me and a lot of other players is that most people coming up stick with a technique. I didn't know what I wanted to do, so I always used D-D-U. I was just trying to get a sound; I didn't know that was a specific technique. I fall in D-D-U category, but I will use the D-U-D when it suits me, not by design, just through necessity. Now that I'm teaching and doing clinics and workshops around and about, I find I have to explain myself more. That's the only reason I have studied why I do what I do. Sometimes I will start with an upstroke, though I'm not sure if it's a good idea for a beginner to try. It just comes from trial and error.

You mentioned experimenting a lot with picks to develop your tone. Can you talk about your choice of pick, bevel and shape, which also must affect that dramatically.

I use the rounded end. Not to get into a big controversy, but I've been using tortoiseshell ever since I was a teenager, When I was coming up, you could get them in music stores. Now I make my own. I have a friend who spends a lot time in the Bahamas, and he finds shell on the beach and brings back little hunks for me. They're very heavy; I'm not sure of the gauge. It's heavier than a Fender heavy, tri-corner shape, but I now favor a more rounded picking end. I like the slightly softer tone I get from it. Looking at other players whose tone I admire, it seems they use a more rounded end.

You also have great left hand technique, which helps more than most people realize in producing great tone.

I stress a good left hand arch and not grabbing the neck in a baseball bat grip. That gets the fingers pointing down more perpendicular to the fingerboard, which also creates a cleaner, clearer tone. I have learned that I want to include all four and sometimes five fingers on my left hand in the mix. When I want to stretch out and use my pinky, and it's important to be able to do that, I've come to realize not to grip the neck with my thumb near the 6th string but more at the V of a V-shaped neck. That way you get more reach. I do not have large hands, but using that technique helps my reach, helps clear the strings and leave them alone when the next string is sounding. Its important in open string or floating playing, to clear away and have those strings ring out. I feel it's essential to take almost a classical approach to arching the left hand and reach the strings to float like that.

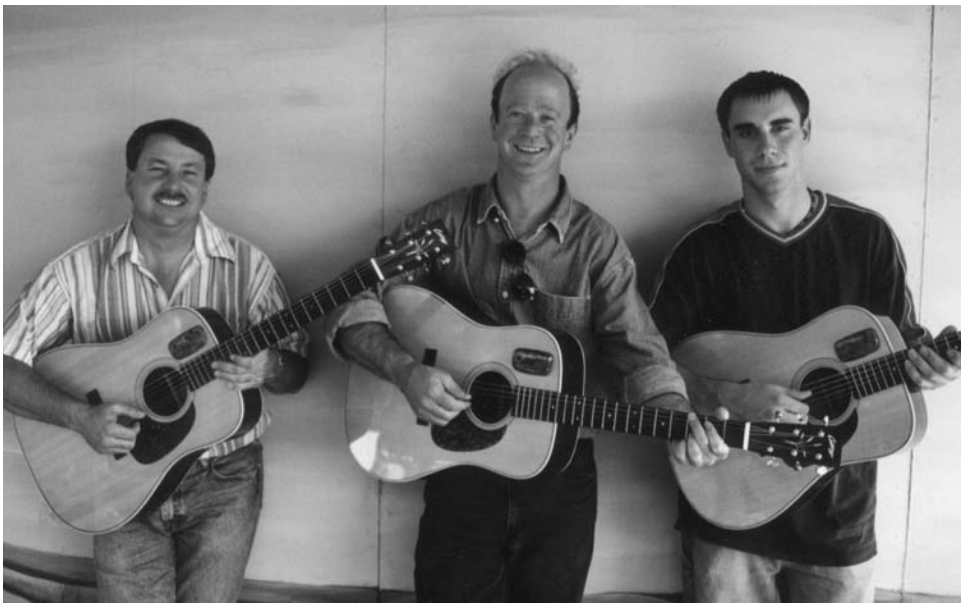
What tips do you have for people on how to practice effectively?

For me, I always loved to accompany songs. I really like to do a good job supporting and selling a song. That comes from years of taking solos and learning to love that aspect of guitar playing. I'm enamored of the idea of working on a song and supporting a singer, creating fills and techniques to make it sound better. So when I practice, I often play along to a vocal unless I'm working on something specific instrumentally. Lately I've been attempting to expand my musical vocabulary a bit. I took one of the few lessons I have ever had from John Carlini, who's a tremendously well-rounded jazz and acoustic musician. So I went to John and took a lesson to try expand my vocabulary. In a loose improvisational way, I often take a cassette player and lay down chords to a fiddle tune or other ideas for a good five minutes, and then play over that and try to come up with more ideas. Playing with a great songwriter like Liz is also very good for me too. I've spent quite a few tours with her, where I've had to play every kickoff, solo and fill. So I have ample opportunity to create phrasing to try to support a given song. I also have to get out of the way when it's time to step back. But playing that much is not a role that came easily to me, because I've always been a band guy.

What kinds of things did Carlini help you with?

Carlini set me up with a bunch of really difficult finger exercises, some [jazz guitar legend] Pat Martino stuff, and his "crabwalk" from the Sept/Oct 2002 issue of FGM. I want to work on things that don't come naturally to me. I'll concentrate on them, then I'll go back for another lesson with him again after I actually have time to practice what he gave me. As flatpickers, we tend to stick with what's comfortable to us, a habit that's human nature. I will always lean toward my strengths, but I have to remember that some of that stuff I already know. With the time that remains to me as a musician to grow and expand what I know, I want to step off the edge and not try to hold on to anything. Keeping your chops up is one thing, which always means playing the familiar and be smoother and getting better tone. But it's a great big world of music out there. I want my ears wide open, and my heart ready to listen to anything that goes by. If I can catch a flavor

Mark Cosgrove performing with the Lewis Brothers in 1986



Mark Cosgrove (center), Allen Shadd (left), and Cody Kilby (right) have performed and conducted flatpicking workshops together. The three former Winfield champs have also released a compilation CD called *Live At Winfield*.

of something Latin or world music or an old Coltrane lick, or learning with John to open my ears to new melodic ideas, I stand ready to do that. The beautiful thing about this instrument and being a musician is that the quest is never over. If that frustrates you, you should try something else. To me, there's not a musician alive who will say he's complete or has become an entity unto himself or herself. We're all striving to get better.

How skilled are you in music theory? Do you read notation and sight read proficiently? Do you understand chord construction?

I have huge holes in my musical education. I came up as an ear player. Teaching has made it necessary to convey musically or through tab what I need to convey. I can read [music] extremely slowly and laboriously, and my tab reading is pretty lame. I have students who come to me who can sight-read tab faster than I'll ever be able to. I use tab to get things across to players. The things I know about chord construction and the mathematics of music have come from the school of hard knocks.

You make a great point in your workshops about not worrying about scales, but try to use the guitar as a voice. How do you develop to that point, though? Do you advocate students use scales and memorized licks as a base to build on first? Your playing is very musical, not scale-driven, which is great. You use lots of bends, floaties and double stops and techniques like that which get away from the common single-string, eighth-note approach. Can you talk about that and where you developed some of those ideas?

I think it's a really good idea to listen to instruments other than guitar. It's our chosen voice and I wouldn't trade it for anything, but I find it limiting to listen to only guitar players. Listen to drummers, horn and keyboard players: the whole range of musicians. There's breathing involved in a horn or a singer, and rests that create rhythmically engaging sounds. Clarence White really keyed into that. His playing had a sense of breathing and being naturally interesting in the same way a horn or singer has. I try to capture some of that in my own playing. The most important aspect is getting out and playing yourself, being in a band, interacting with other instruments and holding that conversation with another player and keeping up your end of the conversation while allowing room for the other person to say something. One of most fun things about being a musician is allowing space and room to breathe and allowing other players or singers to make their statement while providing them with a comfortable backdrop to play against. That's what I like to aim at.

You mentioned earlier that you started as a good improviser, then developed into a player who could create great contest arrangements. What do you feel are the keys to good improvising?

I think the key is experience, developing a spoken vocabulary on your instrument. I do not mean to give the impression that scales aren't important. I think Kaufman said scales are to be discovered inside fiddle tunes, and I think that's entirely true. But it's also important to shake something loose by working with a scale and seeing where it fits well in different chord changes. Improvisational ideas come from strange places. If I set out to learn a scale or mode, maybe I can apply it in one situation, but 9 times out of 10, it rears its head in some other area. That makes it so worthwhile to have done it, but not necessarily in the way you thought it would.

Tell me about your instrument choices. Do you always use the Winfield Collings, even for recording, or is that your stage/travel guitar?

I recorded my last three projects using the Winfield Collings. It's really starting to open up nicely. It gets a great sound for me. I use it both for recording and live. When I play in Europe in March and October with Liz, she owns a Martin D-18V, and she's kind enough to let me use it while on the road there so I don't have to carry my guitar overseas. It's a great instrument with a wonderful voice. I've had the good fortune of being on Lynn Dudenbostel's list, and he's building me a guitar. I'm basically getting a D-28, with Indian [rosewood] back and sides, Englemann top and braces, just a very traditional-looking guitar. I do not necessarily need another guitar, but want to take this opportunity when I can. It sure beats the stock market. That guitar will be ready in the next 18 months. When I get it, I would love to have Marty Lanham build me one, too.

What about your set-up and action? Its probably fairly high because you hit the guitar so powerfully and still get such a clean tone.

I definitely have medium-to-high action, but it's not out of this world. I've never measured it. The guitar was set up for me by Richard Starkey, who does a terrific job. He did the saddle for it. It has fossil ivory pins, bone nut and saddle. I use John Pearse phosphor bronze mediums. I'm not into the coated string thing. I used lights

on the LoPrinzi, which was a leftover from making the jump from electric guitar. In the last five to six years, I care so much about improving my tone I've made the jump to mediums and I'm very comfortable with that set-up now. For a capo, I've used the Shubb, but I recently did some sessions with Rolly [Brown], and he gave me an Elliott, which I understand is expensive. I've never used a thumbscrew capo before, and I've gotten very fond of it. I use the Shubbs a lot because I like playing with drop D in D position capoed at second fret, and that shortcut appeals to me.

On stage, do you ever use a pickup? How do you manage your on-stage sound?

The pickup thing is tough. The Fishman Rare Earth is a simple concept, and it's a good pickup. With an acoustic, the simpler the better. So I'm using the Rare Earth soundhole pickup and an AKG CS1000 condensor mike, to keep it simple. In a large hall or outdoors, you have very little choice in my mind but to use the pickup quite a bit and make the compromise. It's not the most woody sound in world, but Lord knows I want to be heard, even at the expense of a little tone.

Where do you see your playing going, what are you working on? Will we hear more jazz stuff like "Ornithology" fromthe *Round Island* CD?

I feel that that's one aspect that's a lot of fun, and it's not in my comfort zone. I want to learn things and want to stretch, but I still love old-time and acoustic music, fiddle tunes and flatpicking in the Doc and Dan Crary genre. I love that style of music and I will always be doing that. So you'll find me at Winfield at the Kessinger's soaking up Robin's and Dan's and Bob's arrangements and learning new tunes that they turn me on to. It's never something I would forsake for jazz wholeheartedly. I want to try to be a better flatpicker in the traditional sense, be a better entertainer, a better singer, which I'm learning more about from Liz, who's helping me find parts and improve my vocal technique. I just want to be a better musician all around. I'm still incredibly enthusiastic about it. I do not seem to have lost any edge in my desire to excel, if I can. I'm doing what I was always meant to do. That feels great.

For the past several years, Mark has been touring with Liz Meyer. The duo's second recording is to be released soon.

Mark Cosgrove Discography, Books, and Videos:

CDs:

Good Medicine, Noisy Neighbors Music
Round Island, Noisy Neighbors Music
Delaware Crossing w/Richard Starkey, Noisy Neighbors Music
Regions of the Soul w/Liz Meyer, Strictly Country Records
Live from Winfield w/Allen Shadd & Cody Kilby
The Storm w/Liz Meyer (soon to be released)

Books:

Hot Solos for Flatpick Guitarists, Mel Bay Publications

Videos:

Winfield Winners, Mel Bay Publications

Study with Mark:

Mark Cosgrove will be conducting a workshop (along with Rolly Brown, David Grier, and John Carlini) near Philadelphia, PA on Thanksgiving Weekend. For more details, see the ad on page 51.

Good Morning Isaac

Written by Mark Cosgrove
Transcribed by Brad Davis

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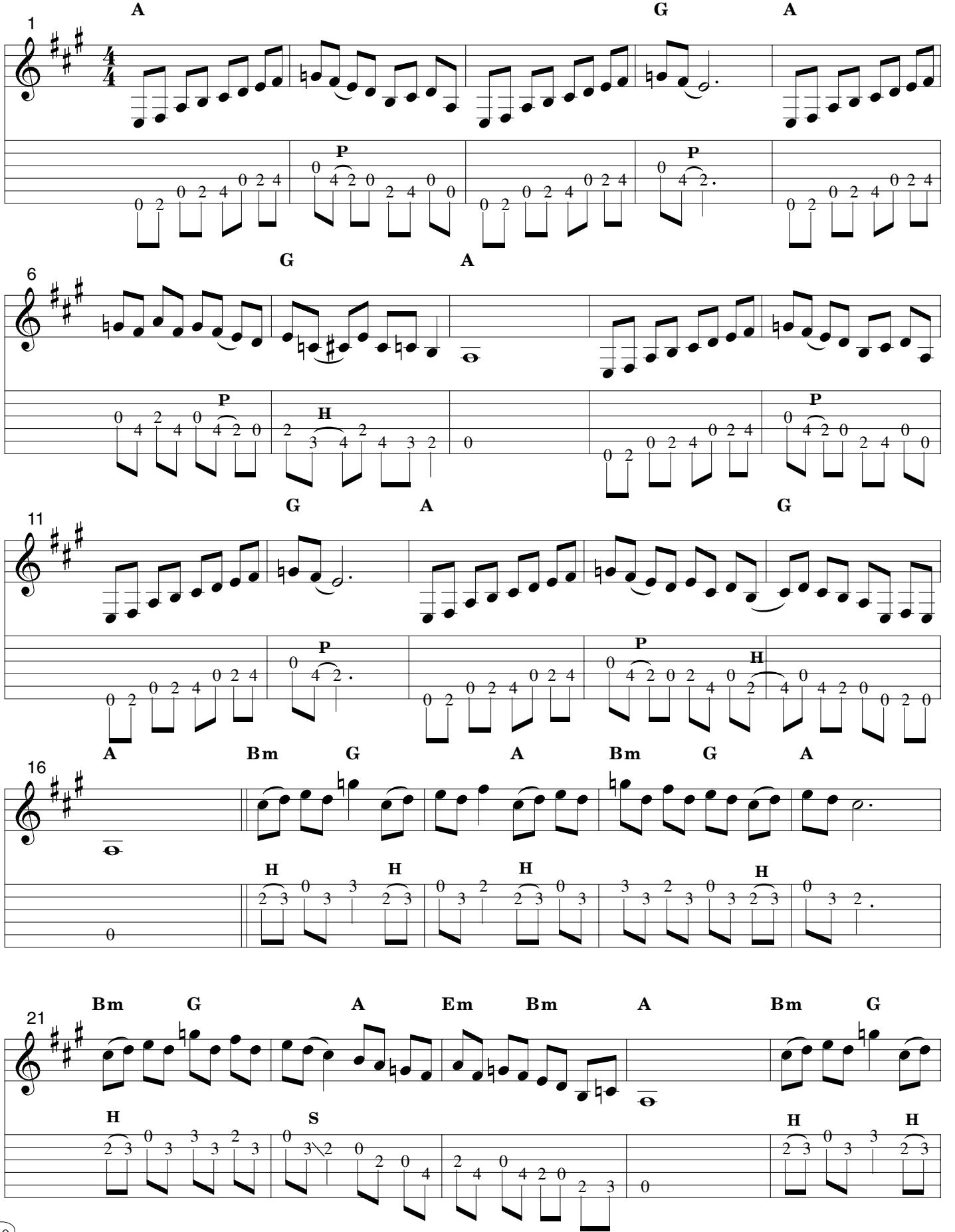
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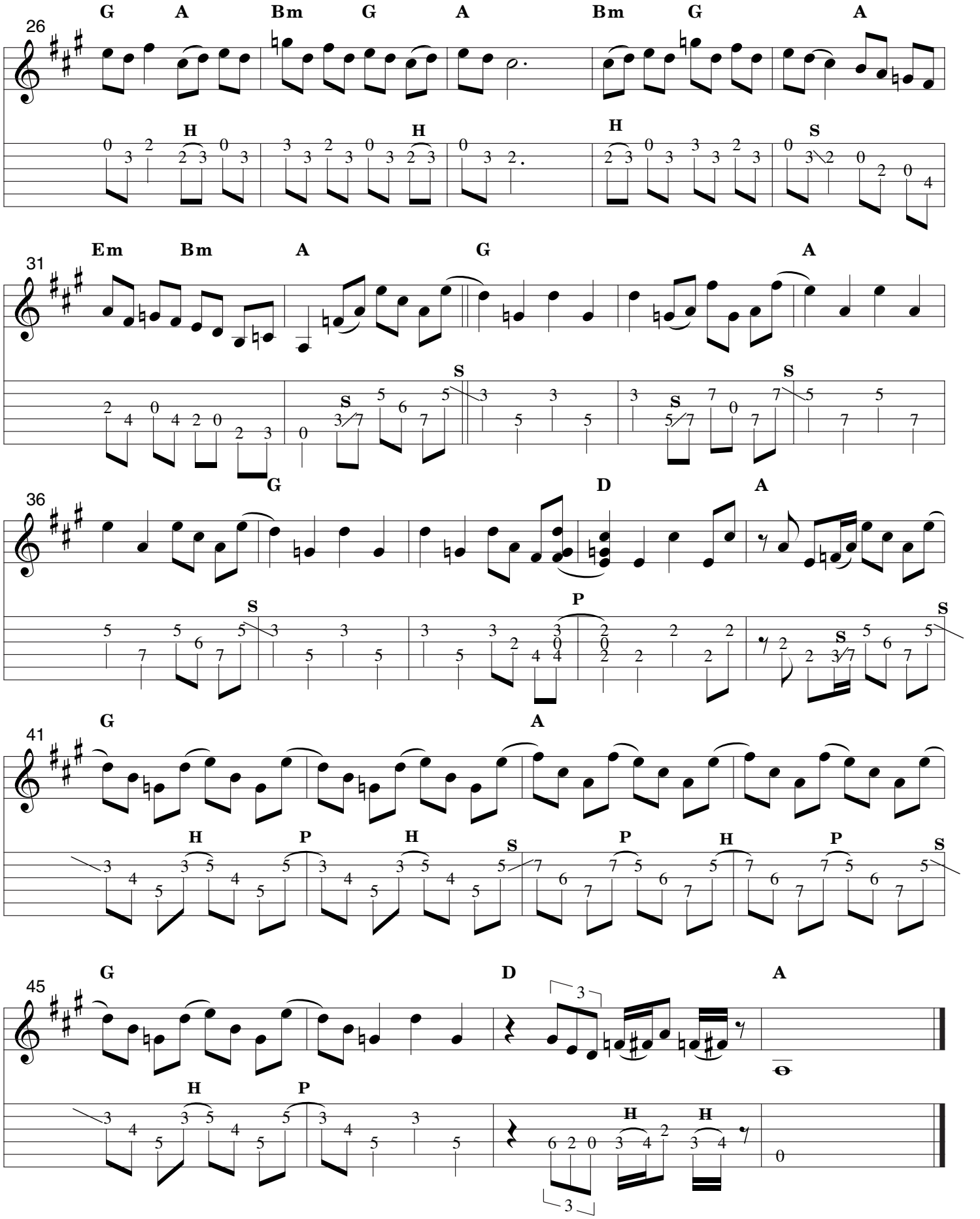
Opera Reel

by Craig Vance

"The Opera Reel" is a great old tune of Irish descent. Over time it's been deemed a New England reel, probably due to the sizable amount of Irish immigrants who settled in New England.

I first heard this piece through friends of mine who were finely attuned to the old Celtic style fiddle tunes.

The tune is in the key of D and is most often played in a medley of other reels. It contains four parts, each of which repeats once before moving on to the next part [AA, BB, CC, DD]. I have taken the liberty of using a bit of a different chord structure here to accompany the tune.

The version here is quite similar to the version that Norman Blake played with The Rising Fawn String Ensemble back in the 80s. It was recorded on his Rounder recording. I've currently loaned my LP out to a friend, so I don't have the label number information. To date, the recording is apparently unavailable on compact disc.

Since this is a reel, it is not necessary to attempt this at breakdown speeds. The hammer-ons and pull-offs will kinda keep you at a certain speed anyhow. Okay, any REAL opera flatpickers out there?

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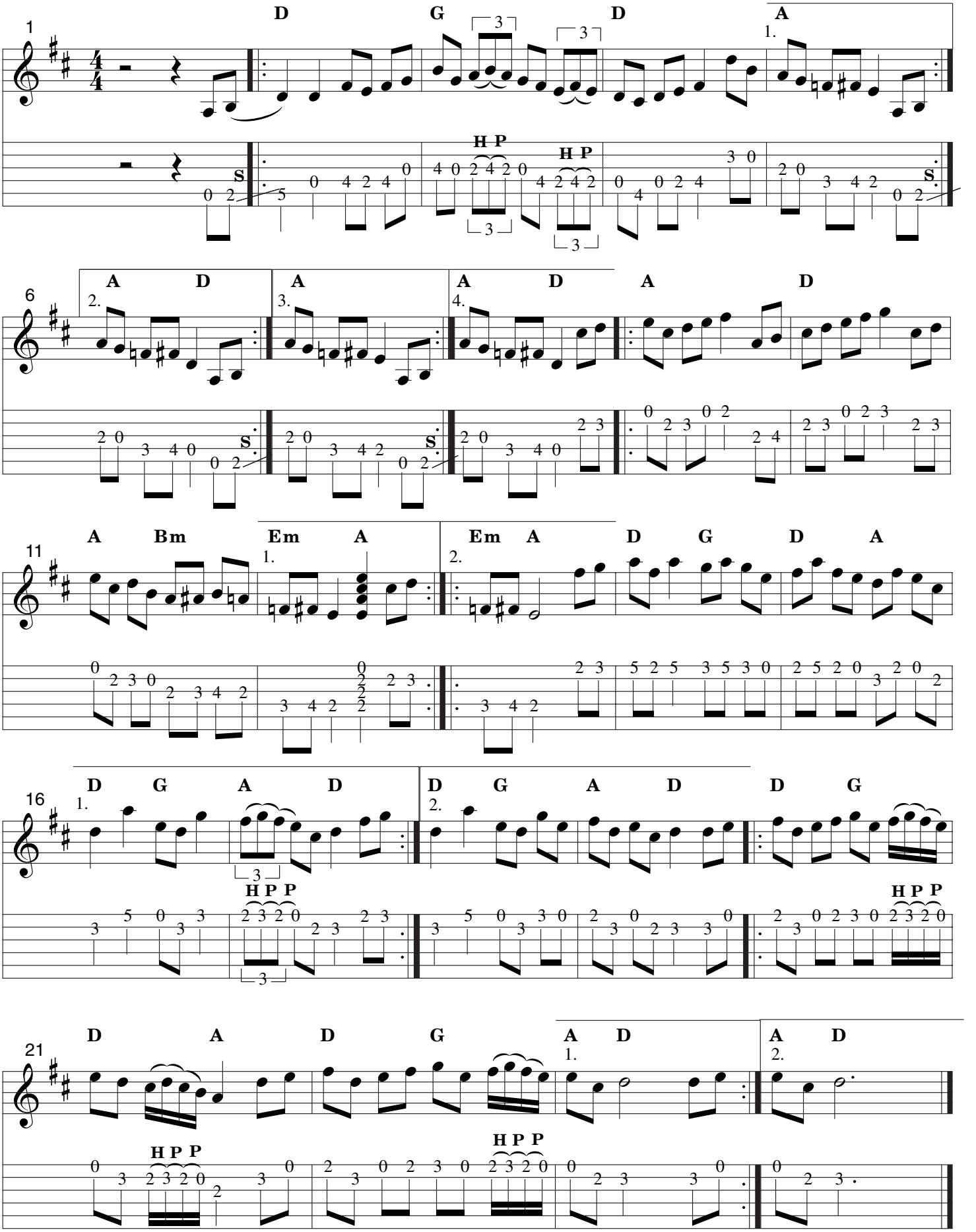
Opera Reel

Arranged by Craig Vance

Beginner's Page

by Dan Huckabee

What A Friend We Have In Jesus

This is a simple melody that's familiar to all and is a very good model song for your musical progress. This particular version is presented in the Carter Family style. If you're not already familiar with this style, its most well-known example is "Wildwood Flower." Many guitar players started out on "Wildwood Flower" because it interweaves the melody with the chords. It's a great way to play when there's no one available to strum the chords for you, and at the same time it helps you to understand the relationship between the chord-progression and the melody.

I've chosen the key of D for this lesson because in D the tune's melody forces you to use your pinky quite a bit. (I'm not sure whether I'm feeling cruel today or I just don't want to see your pinky get held back a grade)

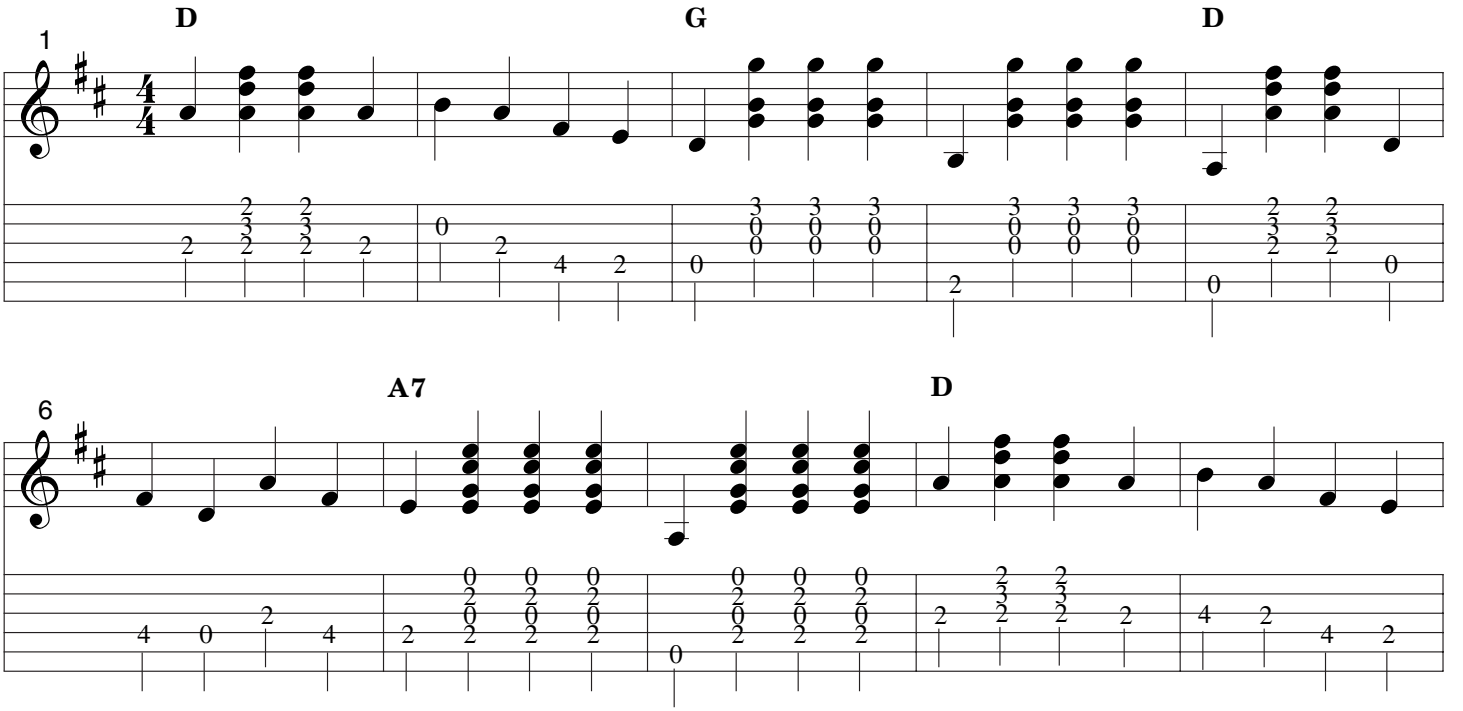
But where do common melody notes fall in open D position? How does our hand form in D when we move through a tune, changing the chords as we go? Will this exercise help to prepare our finger skills and theory understanding for future songs in D? After learning "What a Friend" in D, will that make it possible for us to experiment with trying to pick it out in C or G? Will learning this simple arrangement give us a foundation and prepare us to create a fancier version later?

If you view this lesson for more than what meets the eye, it will teach you a great deal about the guitar and finger skills. It will help you to become independent and to be in control of your flatpicking destiny. Be curious! Be experimental! Be bold! This will eventually set you free. You've seen the guy who can jump in there and play anything. You want to be that person, but you have doubts that you can ever be as good. Don't focus on doubt: focus on "Guitar is Fun."

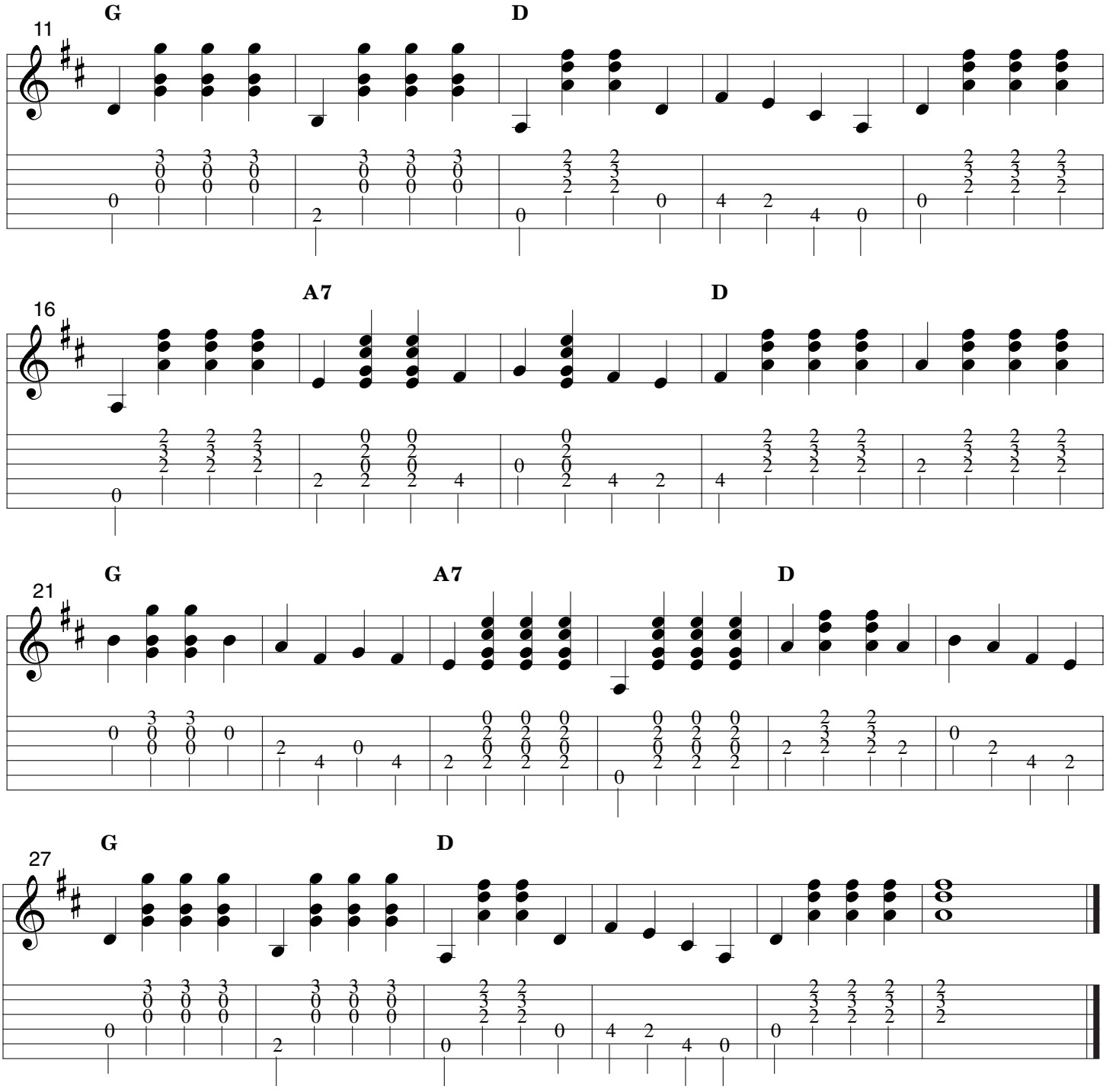
This tune is one of 10 on my video or DVD of *Easy Gospel Guitar Solos*. They are fun-to-learn standards that you can use, and they are the flashlight in guitar darkness. Call me toll-free at 800-543-6125 or check out our all new website: www.musicians-workshop.com.

What A Friend We Have In Jesus

Arranged by Dan Huckabee



What A Friend We Have In Jesus (con't)



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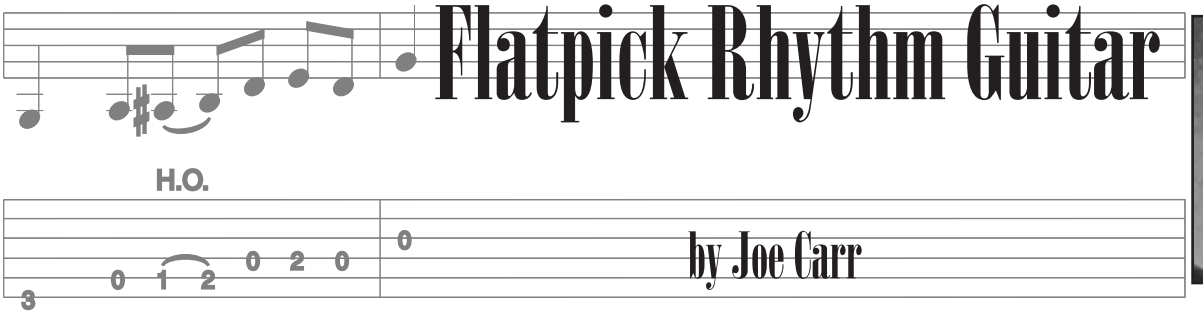
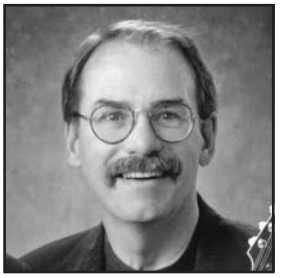

by Joe Carr

Back to Basics

You are not going to like this column. I can tell already. We all want to learn new hot licks and strum patterns. We don't want to be told to forget all that cool stuff and concentrate on the basics. That's exactly what I'm about to do.

The 15th annual Camp Bluegrass was held at South Plains College in Levelland, Texas during July 2002. The guitar faculty included Adam Granger and the dynamic duo of Dix Bruce and Jim Nunnally. As a camp director, one of my jobs is to eavesdrop on classes. Jim Nunnally's rhythm guitar class was an eye- and ear-opener. Jim, of course, is known as a world-class lead flatpicker. His equally impressive rhythm skills may be less obvious, but serious guitarists should pay attention. Let's get back to rhythm class. I was standing behind Jim so that his guitar faced away from me while his seven or so students were facing in my direction. As the entire class played a simple G chord rhythm pattern, I was struck by the power, clarity, drive, tone and volume of Jim's playing. Playing nothing more than a simple "boom-chuck-a" rhythm pattern, this guy blew me away! Later, in private, (just me and my guitar) I listened critically to my own rhythm sound. It was OK, but thin and little sounding compared to Jim's "wall of guitars" sound. Yes, guitars do sound different, but a big part of the sound depends on our right hand. You can buy the $8000 White/Rice/Adirondack Spruce/Fossil Ivory/Brazilian Rosewood/Hot Rod/Limited Edition guitar of your dreams, but if you strum the same old way, it will sound the same old way.

Let's unlock the mystery of the magic right hand. You won't like this part either. Since every finger, hand and arm is unique, the perfect guitar strum is unique to each guitarist. Only through experimentation and careful listening will you discover your magic combination. There are only a few variables, and you can change each one slowly, always listening for changes. Here are some of the most obvious areas.

1) Location of strum: Strumming directly in front of the bridge produces a brittle, bright sound. Strumming over the soundhole produces a warm, mid-rangy, indistinct sound (some call it muddy.) In a group, the best rhythm sound often depends on the other instruments. While a full, round sound (over the soundhole) may be ideal for solo guitar work, a slightly brighter sound (towards the bridge) may be better to accompany a banjo. Many people find a sweet spot somewhere near the rosette rings just below the soundhole (towards the bridge). Record or videotape yourself and experiment changing the location of the strum.

2) Picks: Picks are the cheapest guitar accessory. Buy lots of different thicknesses and materials. (If you pay over $10 for special picks, then picks are the second cheapest guitar accessory.) Picks can sound "bright," "dark," "full," "thin," "flappy," "chunky," or "clicky." (Wait a minute - weren't those the seven dwarfs?)

3) Pick angle: The angle at which the pick strikes the string makes a big difference in tone. Some players strike the string with the pick "flat" against the string while others may find that angling the pick slightly (either to the left or right and only 1 or 2 degrees) produces a more desirable result. This angling can be accomplished by bending the right hand thumb slightly or even by moving the entire guitar up or down on the strap, changing the relationship of the guitar to the hand.

4) "Snap": This element relates more to the timing of your strum than the tone, but it is still an important facet. Watch and listen to your strum and notice whether you "strum" through the strings or if you "snap" through. The difference, even at fast tempos, is that the snap involves a quick flick, as if you were trying to shake water off your hand. Watch the "chop" of a good mandolin player. It's the same motion. Another way to think about it is that you are trying to make all the strings sound at once rather than one after the other. The strum has its place, but the snap gives fast tempo tunes a drive and lift that really wakes up the rhythm section.

5) Angle to the top: During a strum, the pick can be held perpendicular to the top of the guitar, angled down towards the top, or angled away from the top. Each variation will produce a different tone. During the rest stroke, the pick is generally angled towards the top (about 45 degrees). During a free strum or snap, this angle is much less. Generally, a free strum will sound best perpendicular to or slightly down towards the top. Strumming out, away from the top should be avoided.

Working on your rhythm strum is not as exciting as learning a new Tony Rice solo, but the benefits are many. Consider that in the average band, you play rhythm at least as much as you play lead. If rhythm is half or more of all your playing, then it certainly deserves some attention! Make yourself do this. You'll be glad you did. Your fellow musicians will appreciate it too!

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Flatpicking & Folk/Acoustic Rock

by John Tindel

Way Downtown

It was recently my pleasure to participate in a tribute project recognizing Doc Watson's considerable contribution to the lexicon of guitar music, featuring my fine fellow columnists here at FGM. I must admit to some initial hesitation at daring to cover a song by The Man himself, especially since he might actually listen to it someday. But on the other hand, how could I resist the opportunity to pay my admittedly humble respects to this towering figure of acoustic guitar music?

After coercing the help of my partners in RST—Geoffrey Rutledge and Lennox Smith—I chose "Way Down Town" for the 3-part harmony possibilities in the choruses, and for the toe-tapping tempo making it suitable for a snappy, flatpicked solo (which, you may have guessed, will be the subject of today's column).

The first half of the solo is in first position mostly and uses lots of open string hammer-ons and pull-offs, the first one being right at the top of the second measure. Also, the whole second half uses the hammer-on/pull-off technique in almost every measure.

Be sure to pick up the *DocFest* CD through this magazine if you'd like to hear 18 Doc tunes lovingly covered by the great guitarists here at FGM. It was definitely a treat to be involved and I hope that the inimitable Doc Watson gets a little kick out of it! Thanks for all the music, Doc.

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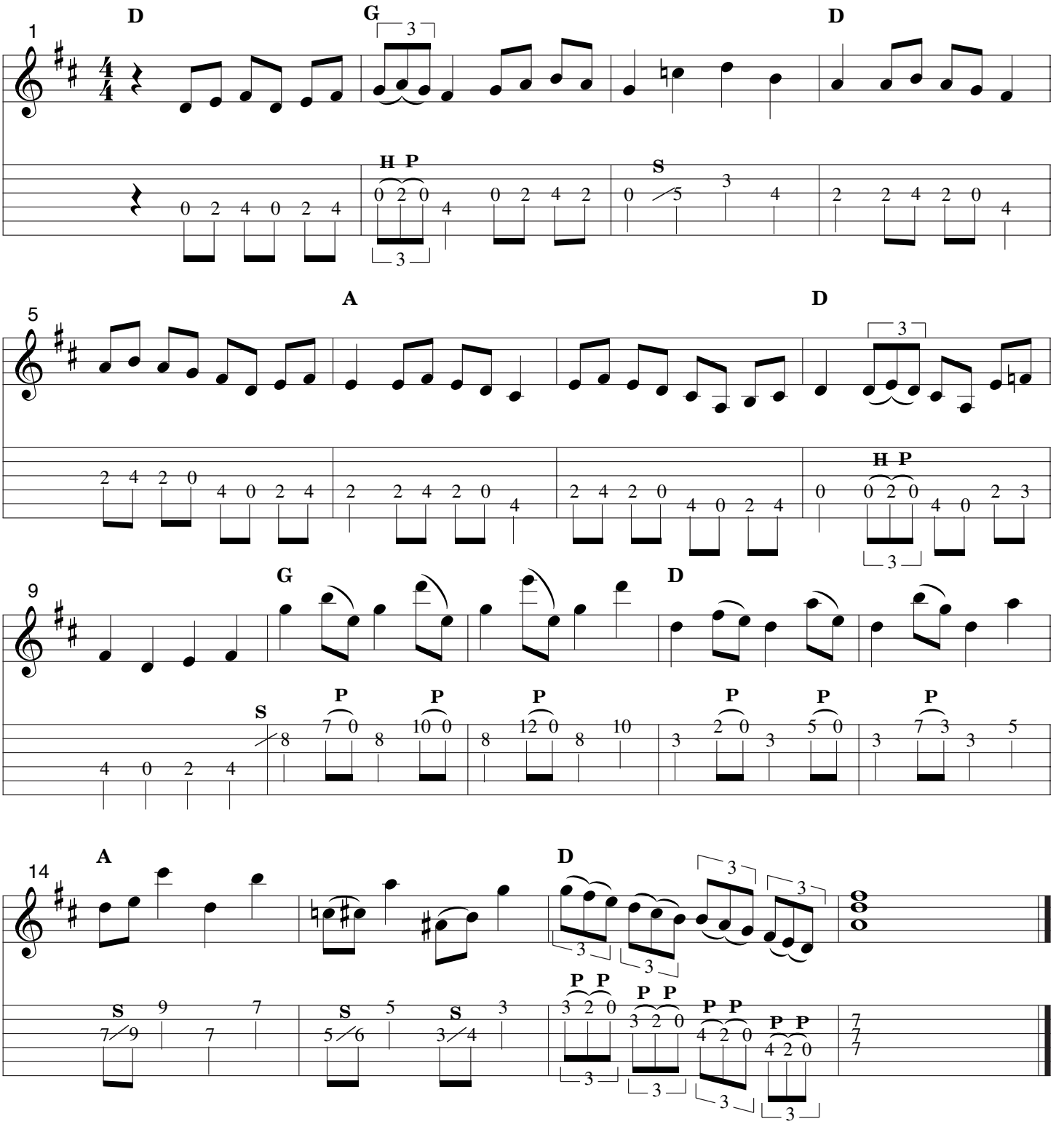
Way Downtown

Arranged by John Tindel

Guitar Maintenance and Repair

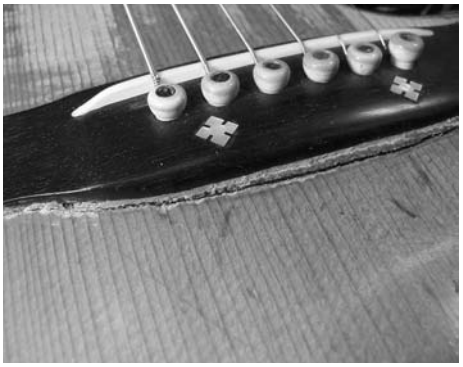
by Frank Ford

A Serious Soundboard Repair in Two Parts

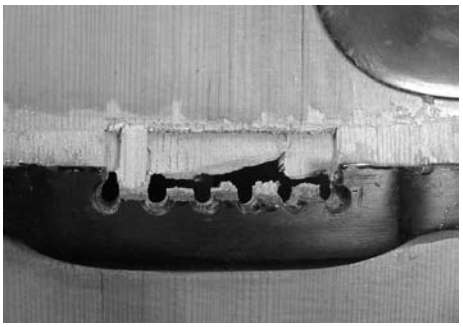
If you look closely at this photo of a 1954 D-28, you'll notice it has a slew of custom inlays on the fingerboard. Its current owner had the work done in the early 1960s, and is still happy with the look. He asked me to restore the instrument without changing its look, so when it came to installing a new bridge, I transferred the inlay to the new bridge.

After nearly 50 years of use, it was long past the time for neck resetting, and the frets were almost completely worn out. Additionally, the bridge had been cut lower to compensate for the change in neck angle, so there was no point in trying to save it. After talking over the repairs, we decided to use a modern bridge, to facilitate the installation of an under-the-saddle pickup element.

Zooming in for a close-up, you can see the site of this guitar's real problem. Years ago, the bridge had come loose, and some serious top damage resulted from it having been left unattended. Later, some well intentioned repair work made a bit more of a mess of the top. Here, the damage is obvious from the cross-grain cut behind the bridge which revealed that the top had been patched under the bridge and had failed to hold the tension of the strings.

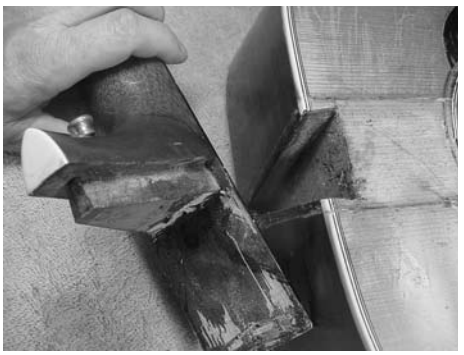


Here's a photo of a 1940 Martin D-28 where similar damage had been left unattended for a long time, causing a similar destruction of the bridge, top and bridge plate:



This instrument will be a candidate for a repair similar to the one I'm describing, but it will have the advantage of not needing removal of previous attempted patching.

I covered neck resetting and refretting in past articles, so I'll simply mention them in passing as I discuss the top repair on this D-28. The first order of business was to remove the neck in preparation for resetting. Having the neck out of the guitar would make the body easier to handle during the rebuilding of the top area.



Turning to the back of the guitar, I slowly and carefully pried the celluloid binding from the back edge all around. My thin palette knife slipped right in to the joint between the binding and the purfling. Since the purfling is not cut all the way through the back, I needed to remove only the binding to reveal the joint between the top and sides.

This is me, gripping my wide flexible putty knife, working at the back joint to pry the back from the guitar. It took a while, but working really carefully with this thin sharp blade, I was able to crack the glue joint all around and separate the back from the kerfed lining. At the neck block, I also worked at the joint from the inside because the back is very fragile, and that's a lot of gluing area. This guitar is only ten years younger than I am, but its joints are much more solid than mine!

With the back off, I have perfect access to all the inside parts, so I can do a precise and solid job of rebuilding. Without removing the back, I doubt if I could repair this kind of damage and previous work. Notice the oversize replacement bridge plate. You'd think a plate this size would have held the tension of the strings, and not allowed the failure of the bridge area.

Also, look at that big fat maple patch under the pickguard area. Interestingly, there is no top damage in that area, not even a tiny pickguard crack. I suppose it had been put there to flatten the top at some time. Later, the pickguard was replaced, obviating the need for such reinforcement. In fact, that piece is over 1/4" thick, so it was a pretty big piece of lumber to be sticking inside a guitar in the first place. It had to go.

Adhered all around the back were little remnants of lining pieces. I left them all in place, because they would make great little "keys" to align the parts when it came time to reglue the back:

Here's how and why the bridge plate failed to do its job. It cupped upward severely with string tension because the grain ran perpendicular to the string tension. Wood has very little strength in that direction. And, above the bridge plate, the top integrity had been broken by the patch added under the bridge, so the top had no strength to resist the string pull.

It's this tendency of bridge plates to bend that has me convinced that all bridge plates should be made with the grain in the same direction as the top grain, so both parts can better resist deformation as a result of string tension, particularly in times of heat stress, when the strength of wood and glue are tested most severely.

With mallet and chisel, I chipped off all the non-original interior timber. Both the bridge plate and the pickguard area reinforcement were maple, and much stronger than the spruce, so I worked slowly until I had chipped them right down to the spruce. Curiously, the big maple patch under the pickguard was made of highly figured curly maple—hardly the sort of piece I'd use if I wanted to keep something straight.

Now, it was possible to view the entire patch that had been added under the bridge.

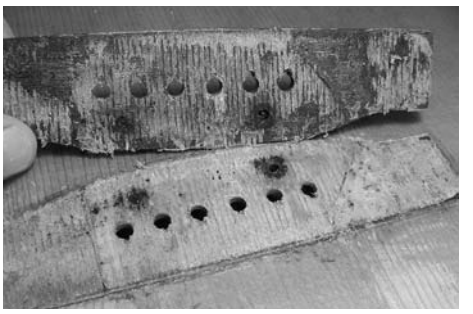
Taking the steam nozzle I had used to remove the neck, I steam-cleaned away the excess glue from previous brace regluing, and steamed off the remaining flakes of the maple plates I'd removed.

Turning again to the back, I took the opportunity to remove some small mahogany crack reinforcement cleats that had been glued a bit off center up near the neck block.

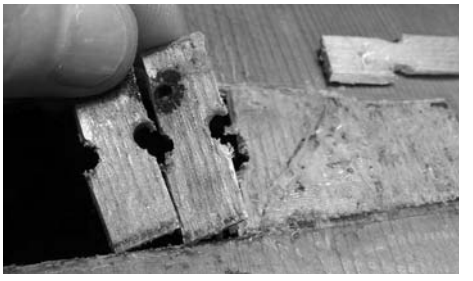
Because that's an area you can see through the soundhole, I replaced the mahogany pieces with a single cross grain reinforcement strip of matching Brazilian rosewood. The color of my patch is so close to the color of the back, it's hardly noticeable by comparison. With such good access, it was easy for me to taper the patch and "fair" it right down to the surface of the back. That way, the patch would flex a bit without letting go if the crack were pressed from the outside. And, a low, sculptured reinforcement looks neater, too.

I removed the bridge in the usual way, using a heat blanket to warm the glue joint, and prying the bridge off with my flexible knife.

Neat as you please, the bridge came loose, revealing the top patch.



Held only by the tiniest amount of gluing area at the edges, the patch was no problem to remove. I simply lifted it out in pieces.



So, now I'm left with a 1954 D-28 all apart and ready for restoration. That's as far as I've gotten as of this writing, so I'll have to finish the rebuilding next time. See you in two months…

Kaufman's Corner

by Steve Kaufman

Tico Taco No Fuba

Editor's Note: Steve sent us this tune just prior to heading off for a big European tour. He didn't have time to provide us with text, but if I know Steve, he'd say, "Watch your down-ups!"

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Tico Taco No Fuba

from Steve's upcoming 'Flatpicking The Rags and Polkas' Mel Bay Book

Abreu

Arr. by Steve Kaufman

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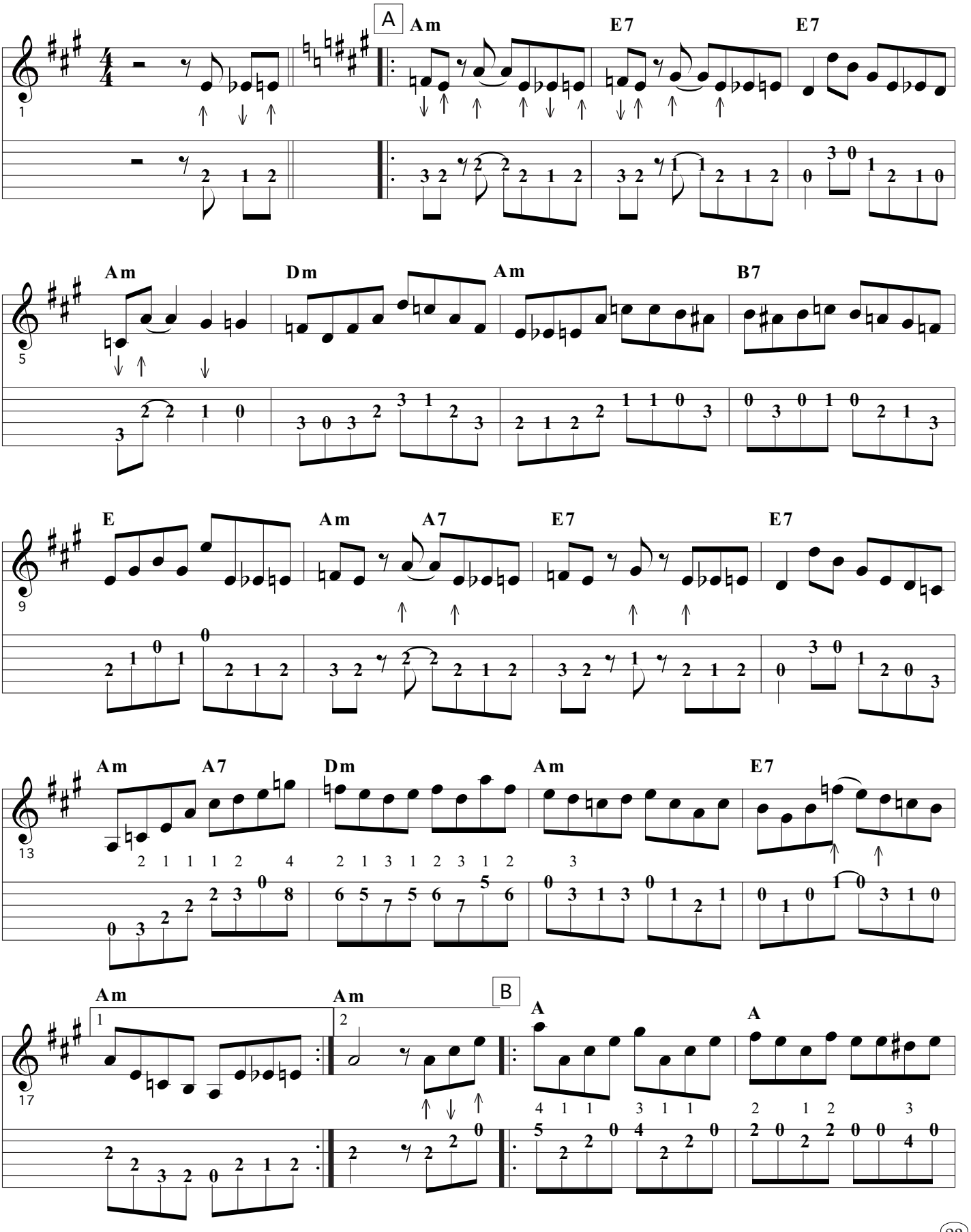
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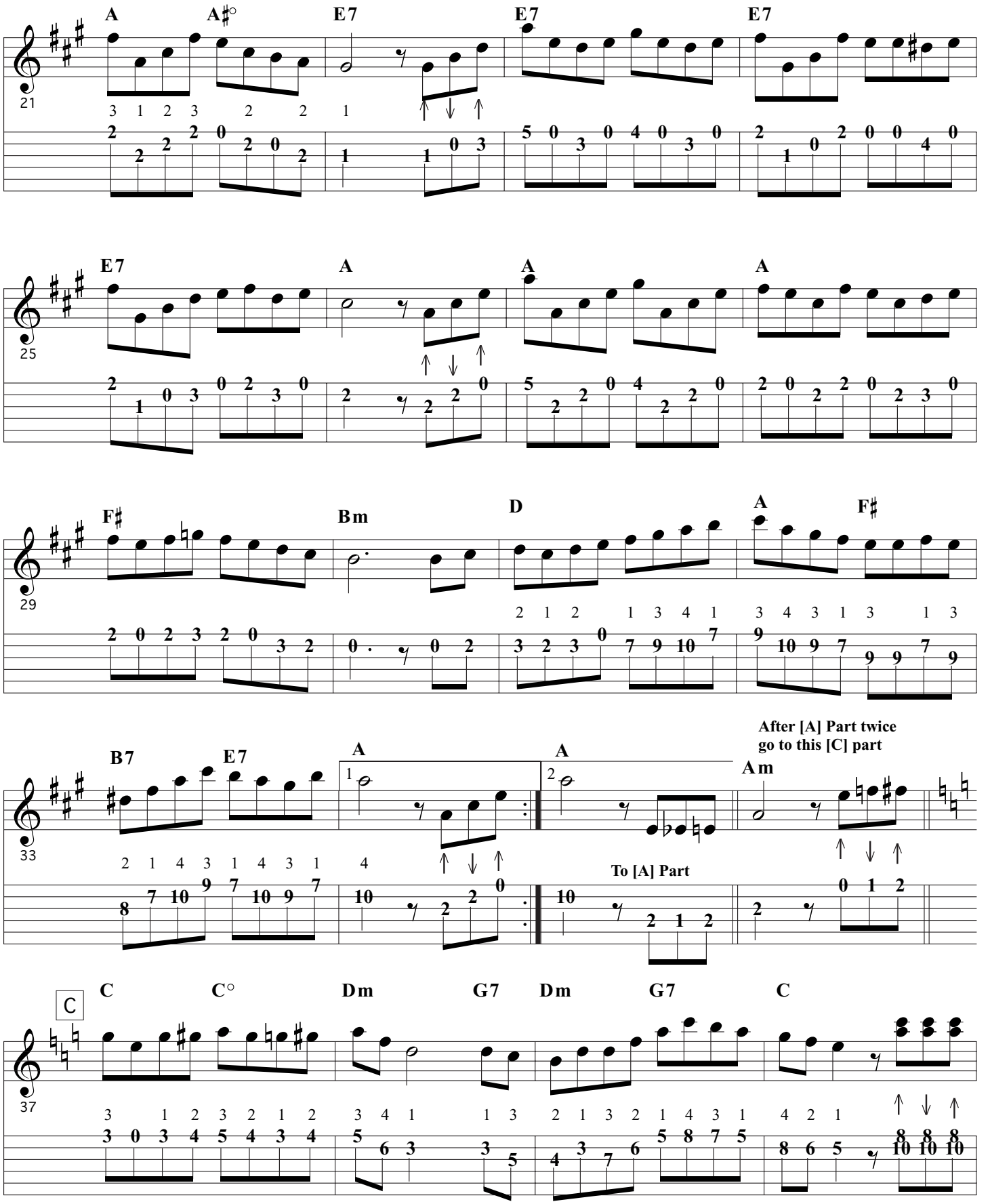
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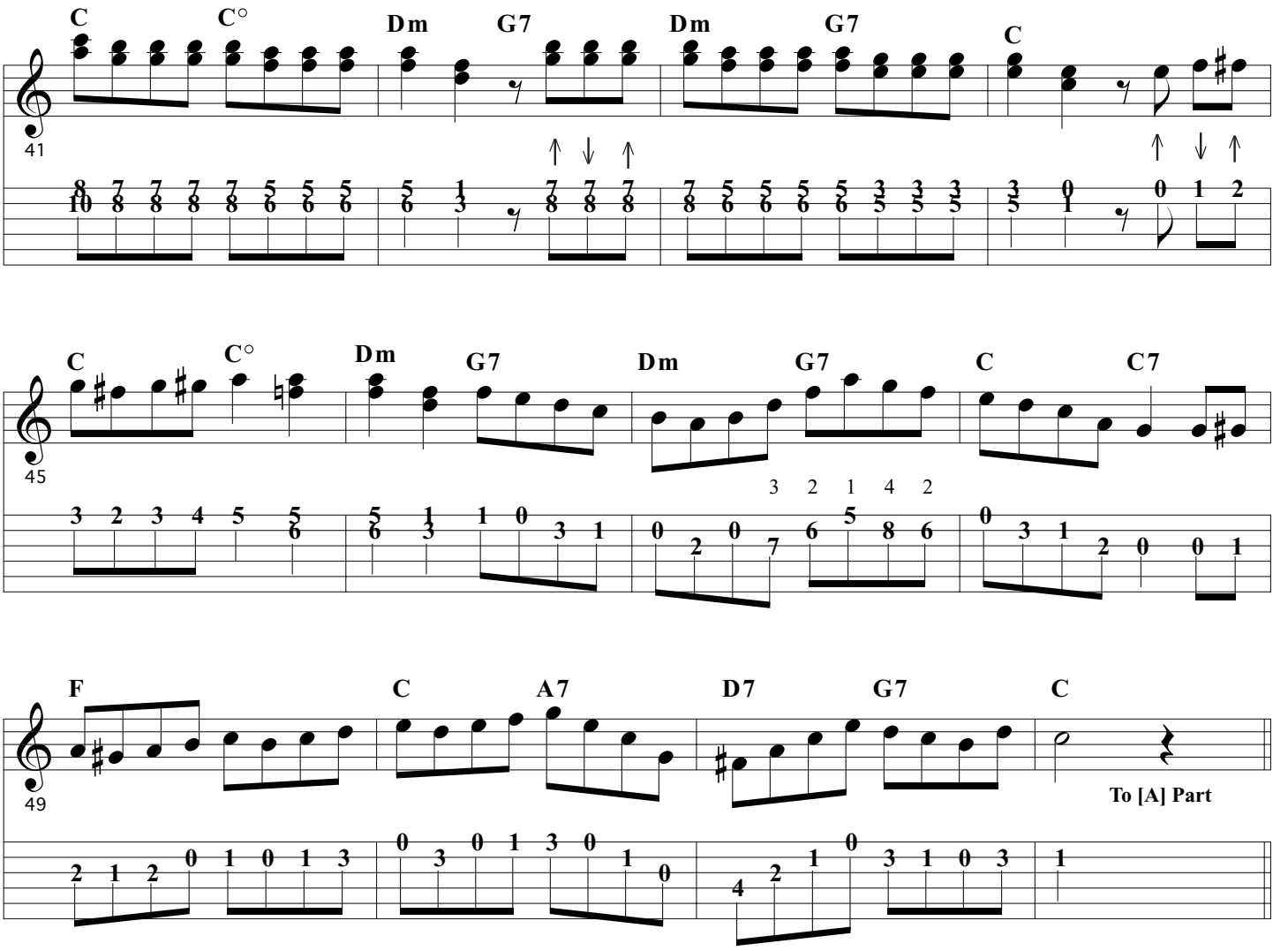

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Adventures in Acoustic Music: Swingin' Holidays!

by John Carlini

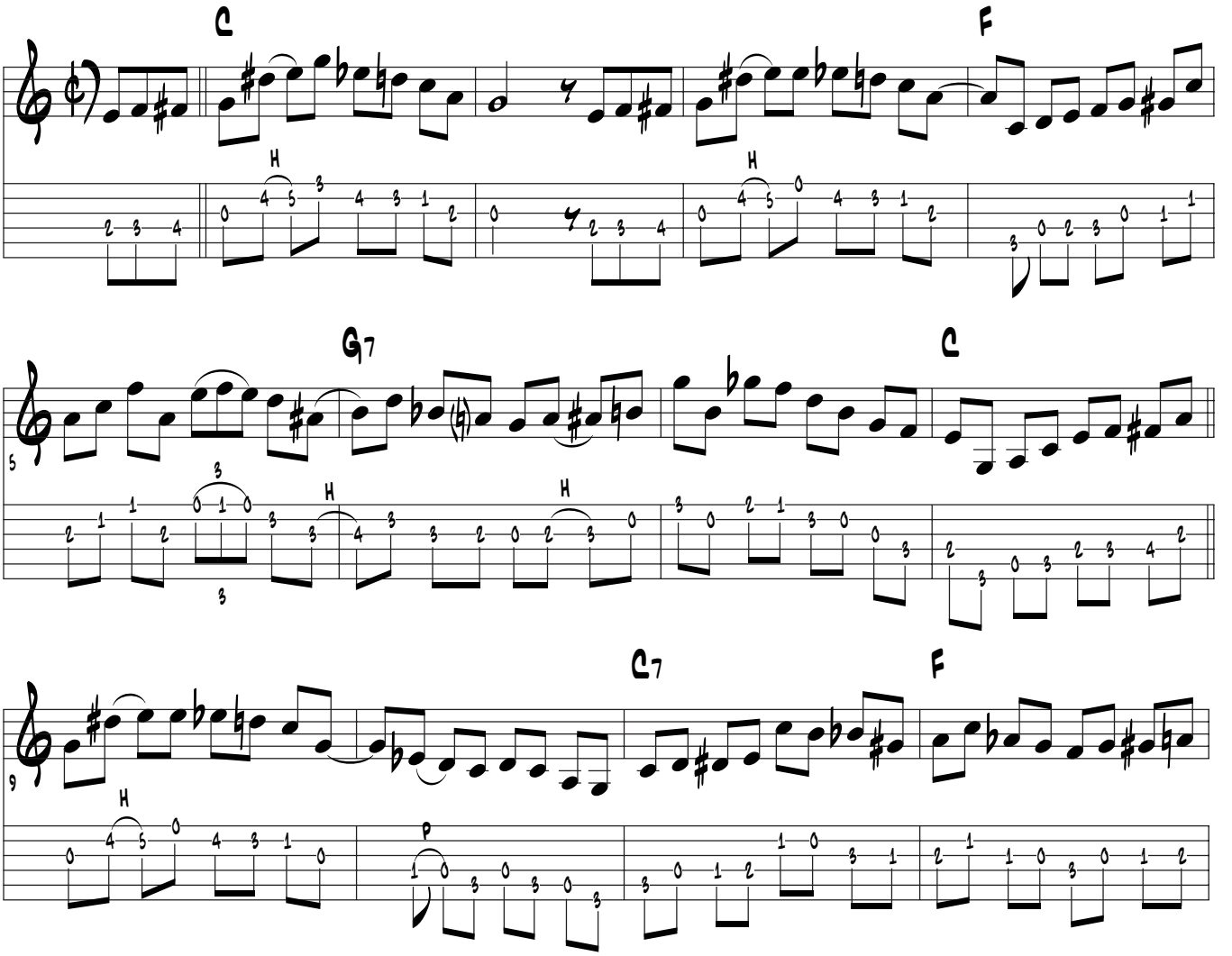
Swingle Bells

This month, in celebration of the holiday season, I offering a kind of bluegrass/swing guitar solo based on the "changes" to a famous holiday tune. I'm calling it, um, "Swingle Bells" (!) and I hope you have as good a time playing it as I did writing it! It's loaded with "presents" in the form of licks. You can apply them to various situations in your own playing.

Happy holidays! I wish you all the blessings of the season.

For performance and teaching information, lots of new acoustic music, and musical news items of interest, please visit John Carlini's web site, www.johncarlini.com. Order his teaching videos by calling 1-800 543-6125 or visiting www.musiciansworkshop.com.

Swingle Bells

Arranged by John Carlini

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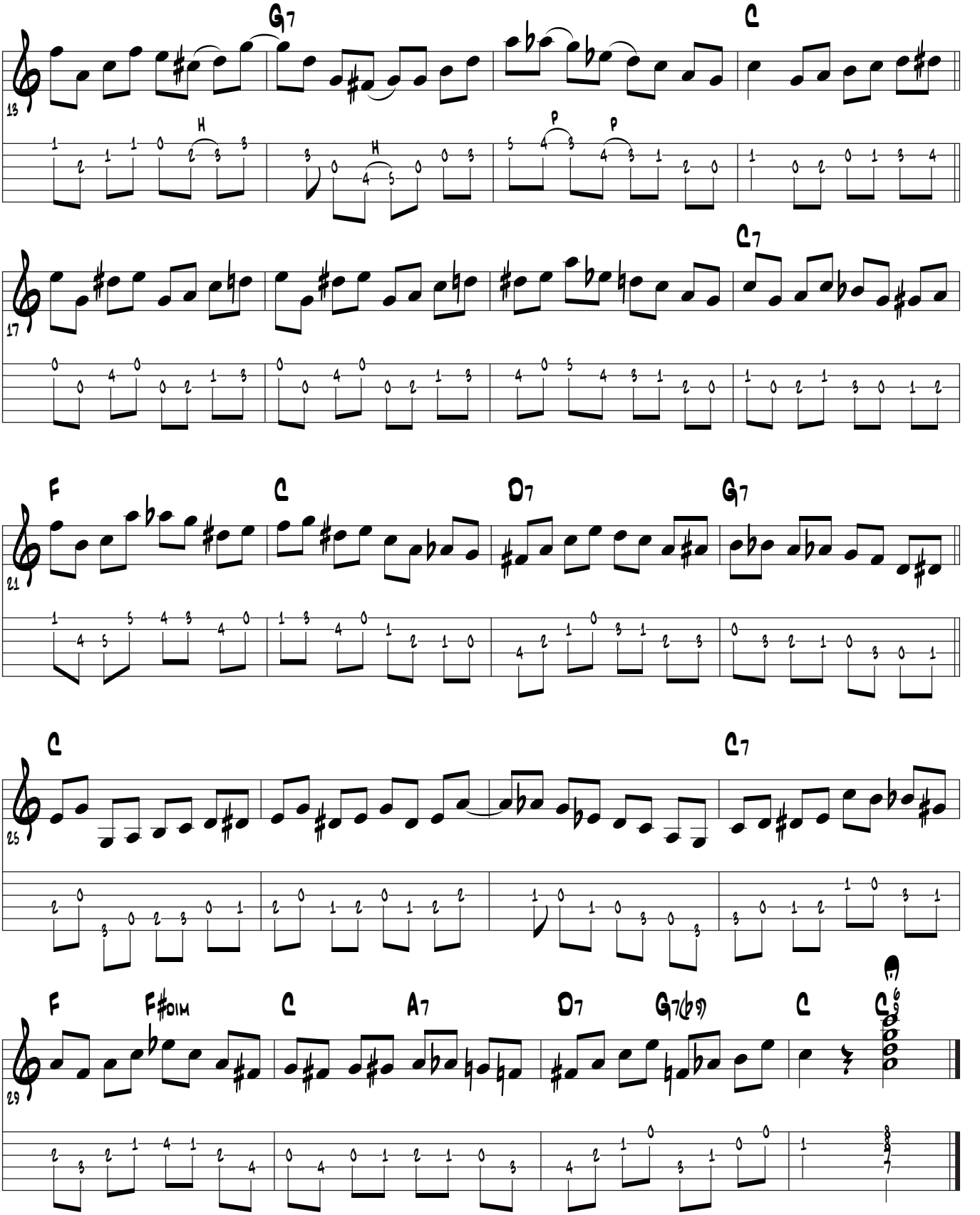
Flatpick Profile:
Mike Scap

by Ray Schmitt

Just think how special it would be for you as a bluegrass picker to have one of the best guitar players in the world ask you for a ride to the grocery store? That happened to me when Mike Scap called to see if he could catch a ride to the South End Grocery in Lost River, West Virginia. Scap, who does not own or drive a car, said that fresh produce came in on Friday afternoons and would be gone by midday Saturday. Who is this musician living in obscurity who would trade a guitar lesson for a trip to the market?

A number of bluegrass heavyweights know Mike Scap and have played with him during their musical careers. Guitar phenom Steve Kaufman calls him "the Jeet Kun Do of guitar playing." Former bandmate Tim O'Brien places Scap "in a class with David Grier, or Bryan Sutton or any of the top players in bluegrass." "His sound," Pete Wernick says, "was different from anybody." Yet few other people seem to have heard of him. How does a musician of this caliber continue to be an unknown to fans of acoustic music?

Scap grew up in New Jersey not far from New York City. A child prodigy with an emotional edge, Mike won awards and acclaim in high school as a talented visual artist and could seemingly play any musical instrument placed before him. The first time he sat down at a piano he played a concerto, even though his hands had never before touched a keyboard. Mike lost count of the number of instruments he can play, but thinks the total is around fourteen.

Mike Scap is literally the best bluegrass guitar player that nobody has heard. That's what Steve Kaufman thinks. The three-time National Flatpicking Champion first met Scap at the Englishtown Music Hall in Englishtown, NJ while both were teenagers. Kaufman recalls going to Scap's house where Mike was playing along with a record of the legendary jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt. Mike explained Django's two-finger style. Steve could not believe anyone was playing that fast, smooth and inventively with just two fingers. Mike said, "That's not tough," and proceeded to play along with the record using only one finger.

Steve Kaufman is not alone with a Scap-Django story. Tim O'Brien, who played with Scap both in Hot Rize and the Ophelia Swing Band, said "Mike would listen to a rare Django tape for the first time and get mad, saying, 'That was my lick! I made that up!' And I believe he probably had made the lick up himself. And don't blame him for being disappointed that the other guitarist, even an icon like Django, had already made it up."

Kaufman played some gigs at the Englishtown Music Hall with Mike and another guitarist, Henry Queen, from North Carolina. The owner of the Music Hall put the three together and billed them as the Jersey Guitar Stars. Queen showed Steve the standard bluegrass runs while Mike showed him bluegrass swing. Steve had been listening to Doc Watson and was working on that style of playing. But he later began copying "what he could comprehend" of Mike's style of playing. Steve would bring in his tape recorder and record the Music Hall sessions, effectively "stealing" Scap's licks. Finally Mike announced "no more."

Scap's first forays into bluegrass bands occurred in the Northeast. He played for about four years in New Jersey with an innovative bluegrass swing band fronted by singer and bassist Dave Gant. Glen Borden played mandolin and fiddle, with Mike on lead guitar and Chubby Conine on banjo. They worked festivals and clubs under the name "Union Made." The band played frequently in Asbury Park, NJ and the legendary Bruce Springsteen would often stop by to listen and sometimes sit in. Scap relocated to the Boston, MA area and brought his trademark bluegrass swing to the formidable and cutting edge band "Tasty Licks." Mike recalls how much he enjoyed playing with mandolinist Jack Tottle. "We continued to play swing and innovative material including traditional stuff in our own way." Tasty Licks would eventually spawn banjo superstar Bela Fleck.

Mike Scap

Scap bounced around between the East Coast and Colorado where his musical style would be stamped on other bands. He hooked up with banjo master Peter Wernick after Wernick moved to Colorado from Ithaca, NY in 1976. Pete began playing with area musicians and friends at jam sessions, including Mike Scap on guitar. Mike played on a demo tape that landed Wernick a record deal in 1977. "It contained both fast stuff, and soft and sensitive music," Wernick recalls. Scap's guitar artistry was "a jaw dropper. The fluency and clarity of texture was a cut above." Wernick feels that Mike's playing on these early recordings was influential in his landing a recording contract. He wanted Scap to play guitar with him on the record Dr. Banjo Steps Out but Mike, back in New Jersey, was averse to flying. So Charles Sawtelle stepped in to play guitar on the record.

Pete Wernick and Tim O'Brien formed the legendary, ground-breaking band Hot Rize in 1978 and asked Mike to come play guitar. Scap did return to Colorado, and Sawtelle switched over to bass. Hot Rize taped a number of their live shows with Scap on guitar. "The first demo we sent around was a live show as an opening act for Doc Watson," says Wernick. "You could even hear amazement from the audience in the live recordings. One of Mike's

specials was playing the 'Sheik of Araby' and he would always get a rise out of the audience." Tim O'Brien added, "I got a tape of an early Hot Rize show recently, and his version of 'Sheik of Araby'—while admittedly drawn from Clarence White—was stunning, and he had his own stuff in there too."

The Scap-O'Brien connection was not limited to Hot Rize. In addition to the first edition of Hot Rize, O'Brien played with Scap in the Ophelia Swing Band. In this ensemble, Duane Webster played bass, Dan Sadowski played guitar, Linda Joseph was on violin, Chaz Leary on washboard, and Tim and Mike on mandolins. "I'll tell you, he was by far the best musician in either group," O'Brien said. "His tone, time, and ideas were always so strong, and often breathtaking. He would just spin this amazing stuff out on guitar and mandolin. Any key, any tempo." Although they had a great time and played all different kinds of material, Scap was very serious about music and could be a little difficult to work with.

Hot Rize was becoming increasingly popular, requiring more road trips than Scap could commit to. "Mike Scap said he'd do anything if there were no cars," Tim O'Brien recalls. "He said he'd walk fifty miles to a gig if there were no cars!" That view and other fairly radical ones are an indication of why Scap hasn't found it easy to interface with the rest of the "normal" world. So Mike left Hot Rize in April 1978 after playing only a few months. This departure came despite Wernick's best hope and wishes.

Mike Scap is a master of technique. He is the first person Pete Wernick ever heard do "floaties." Wernick explains "the idea is to combine fretted notes and open strings, while crosspicking on three or more strings, so that the notes can sustain and ring over each other. By quickly changing the selection of notes while some strings are still ringing, you get a cascading effect that's quite distinctive and dazzling." Wernick remarks "Only a few people besides Mike use this technique very much. It requires a lot of right-hand speed, which I assume must be pretty rare."

Mike Scap continued to employ this dazzling technique while playing with other ensembles. After leaving Hot Rize, Scap teamed up with Bill Millet as a guitar duo. "We did jazz, classical. That's when I really developed playing 'floaties.'" Scap says he modeled his technique after Chet Atkins who played them with his patented finger-picking style. "I had been playing 'floaties' since high school," Scap tells. "But I perfected this technique with a flat pick. It sounds like a harp, or a music box. Very impressionistic." But his musical partnership with Millet ended prematurely and Scap returned somewhat dejectedly to New Jersey.

Scap was to bounce back when he formed what he thinks might be his super band. "Arabesque was the most innovative band I played in. It was so unique. We formed the band in New Jersey, but I told the band members that if we wanted to make a living we would have to go to Colorado." In 1980 the band members—Mark Diamond on bass, Mike Fitzmaurice on rhythm guitar, Eric Levine on violin, and Ralph Brandafino on mandolin—quit their solid day jobs and headed for Estes Park, CO. Scap also played mandolin and handled the guitar work. Like so many of his earlier bands, Arabesque did not release a studio album but continued to record live shows. After giving their music a shot before appreciative audiences, Mike decided to leave the band.

Mike Scap now found himself alone in the Rocky Mountains. But with his musical skills, it wasn't long before he teamed up with Bonnie Phipps in a band called the "Colorado Folk Ensemble." They had received a grant from the state to perform music. The Ensemble differed from earlier Scap groups since it featured Bonnie on autoharp and also included cello and concertina. Mike continued to play guitar. "While this was Bonnie's show, I did some of the arrangements." The Ensemble recorded an album for which Pete Wernick wrote the liner notes. He described their sound two decades ago as "New Age Folk."

Steve Kaufman's and Mike Scap's paths would cross again in 1980 at the National Flatpicking Championships in Winfield, KS. Mike was still living in Colorado at the time and was encouraged to play despite his own reluctance to compete. Kaufman laughed when he described Scap reaching into the hat to draw a number for order of play in the contest. "Four numbers stuck to his hand before falling to the floor. Mike reached down to pick one up, only to draw the first spot in the competition–the least desirable place for a contestant to be in." Kaufman remembers Scap playing well, but unfortunately the rhythm guitar player was rough. Scap, also suffering from lack of sleep, wound up not making the cut or placing at all. (No shame in that: contestant

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Mark O'Connor did not place that year either.) And to add insult to injury, when Scap returned home to Colorado he found that other members of his then-current band Tomatoes Are Cheaper had been asked to record an album with Vassar Clements during his absence.

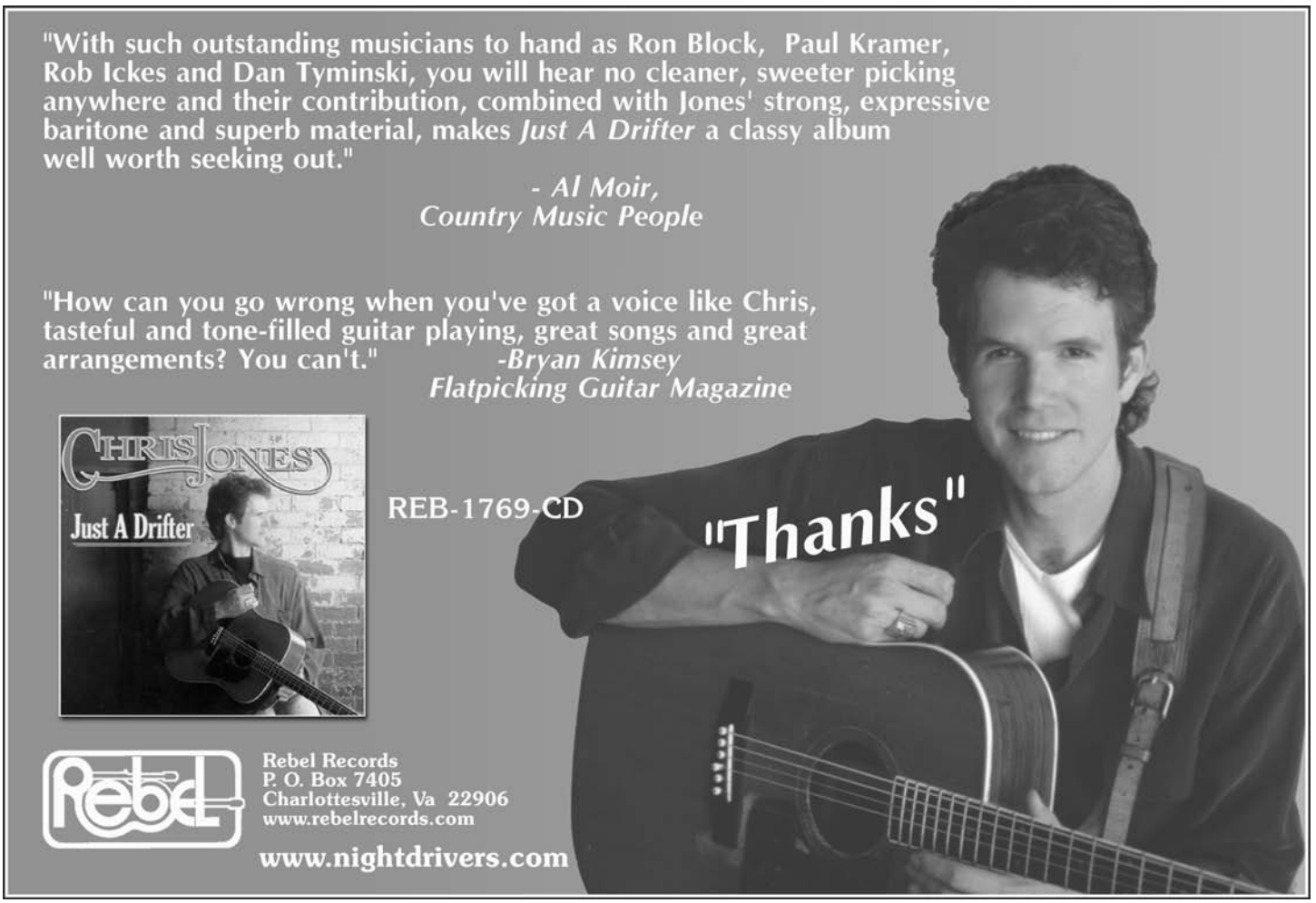
Musicians always appreciate a steady gig. In 1985, Scap found himself playing fiddle and singing western music with Tom Justin. "I did the arrangements of the musical harmonies", Mike pointed out. They worked at the Lazy B Ranch which featured chuck wagon suppers. Besides playing music, they had to serve the guests food and drink. "We played up to 180 performances in a row during the warmer summer months, but since the area was not known for skiing, we had the winters off." He filled most of his time off playing solo Irish fiddle music in an Italian restaurant. "I changed my stage name to 'Mike O'Scap'," he joked. Scap played with Justin's western band on and off for ten years.

Kaufman did not see Scap again for many years until Mike came by his place in Knoxville around 1995. Steve tried to get Mike to sit down and play guitar with him. "Mike was just not interested in playing. At that time he had been working on his *Sketches* recording project and he wanted me to hear it." Kaufman says Scap's eyes were always wide open. "You can't tell what he is thinking when he is listening to you because he is thinking about music." Scap continued eastward to West Virginia where he linked up again with his old musical buddy from New Jersey, Dave Gant.

Mike moved into a Spartan A-frame cabin and set up a recording studio. He continued working on *Sketches* which was intended to be just that: a collection of musical sketches. Scap had no intention on releasing it as a finished product. Instead, he merely wanted to show people what he could do so that they could say "I like this, or I like that." That would then allow Mike to score whatever type of music the person wanted. His overriding intention was to produce the music for use in films or nature programs. Notwithstanding the frequent electrical power interruptions, Mike Scap worked diligently to complete Sketches which he mixed with Mike Brantley at Blue Ridge Recording in Luray, Virginia. "I was recording with air fans blowing. You could hear the sound on each track noticeably before the music started. Brantley was able to actually eliminate that noise somehow. I don't know how he did it," Scap exclaims. "It was amazing. And he was understanding music that he had never heard before." After finishing one track Brantley would say "that's my favorite song," only to change his mind after hearing the next composition.

Steve Kaufman penned the liner notes to *Sketches*: "Friends, you are about to listen to one of the world's greatest guitarists and my good friend, Mike Scap. Mike was the single most important influence on my musical development. He is the Jeet Kun Do of guitar playing. A style without a style–meaning that Mike can play in any situation, any mood, and speed and with anyone and not ever sound awkward, or restrained." With the exception of Russ Barenberg's "Magic Foot," Mike Scap (formally credited as Mike Scoppettuolo) wrote all the songs and played all the instruments (guitar, mandolin and fiddle).

Sketches was to garner critical acclaim. *Acoustic Musician* magazine began its


"With such outstanding musicians to hand as Ron Block, Paul Kramer, Rob Ickes and Dan Tyminski, you will hear no cleaner, sweeter picking anywhere and their contribution, combined with Jones' strong, expressive baritone and superb material, makes Just A Drifter a classy album well worth seeking out."
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review by saying "This is probably the most incredible guitarist you never heard! Mike Scap's playing will amaze and impress even the most hard-nosed music lover…Scap takes the listener on a journey from the edge of bluegrass through the land of classical with a variety of stops along the way…Scap's topnotch compositional skill and his powerful technique on this, probably the sleeper disc of 1997, is sure to please."

"Mike Scap's music has no real boundaries," Steve Kaufman says. "There is probably nothing out there that he couldn't do." Pete Wernick laments that his playing with Scap was "just a small window of time twenty-five years ago." But the way he remembers, "Mike's style was a well-defined but fluent, almost crystalline sound. A delicacy that you don't hear in other players. There are a lot of passions and surprises in his playing. He was not just a ferocious, flashy guitar player, but also played with feeling and sensitivity. That's quite a combination." Wernick adds "At the time he was so unique. Tony, Doc, and Crary had their own style, but Mike's sound was different from anybody."

Mike has lived both in the city and the country where he now finds solace. Life in the boonies can be a bit daunting since Mike does not own or drive an automobile. A borderline recluse, Scap almost abandoned music completely a few years ago when he sold off his instrument collection at fire sale prices and was about to turn back to visual art. Almost ten years have passed since Mike Scap has really played with a band, the most notable exceptions being some work with Front Range and local gigs with his longtime band mate Dave Gant.

There are those musicians who can neither stand still nor rest on their laurels, and whose current output rarely resembles anything they've previously turned out. These types are generally only well known to other artists of their respective genres, and a small circle of fanatics. Mike Scap is one of these musicians. Even now he is working on creating new, original music and trying to stay focused and inspired, trying to get into a pattern of recording and writing. "Recording," he said "is a lonely thing." And recording is now the most important thing for Scap. He is presently searching for "the right guitar" for his new recording project.

Peter Wernick can understand why people may not have heard about Mike Scap. Knowing Mike's capabilities, Wernick believes that Scap will fulfill his own musical destiny. "I hope Mike can put together his new opus and let the world know how good he is and appreciate what he does." But he admits that this will be a formidable task given that Scap does not tour. "The acoustic music biz is slow to recognize even very talented people like Mike. Hot Rize worked hard for three years before we received any recognition. It was hard work playing bars for low money, but we held to the dream and it wound up working out."

Tim O'Brien summed it up. "He's a music purist and I guess that's kept him from being out there on the circuit playing for the audiences that would appreciate him so much. It's a shame; a few of us know how damned good he is. Mike is definitely in a class with David Grier, or Bryan Sutton, or any of the top players in bluegrass." And as Steve Kaufman also wrote in his liner notes, "Mike was then, and is now, an amazing player of music…His ideas are always fresh and he has the uncanny ability to play guitar (and mandolin, and fiddle, too) in a totally improvised world of boundless music with a passion and prowess not seen in a long, long time." Kaufman shares the frustration of many that Scap does not play publicly. "There is no place you can go out and hear him play. You can record a CD but record labels will not be interested in running with it because Mike does not travel. Here is a guy you may never hear but if you can get a chance GO!"

Ray Schmitt has played bluegrass for many years with his band Foggy Bottom and now resides in Mathias, WV where he is a filmmaker. Sketches is the sound track for Schmitt's film on nature photographer Jim Clark.

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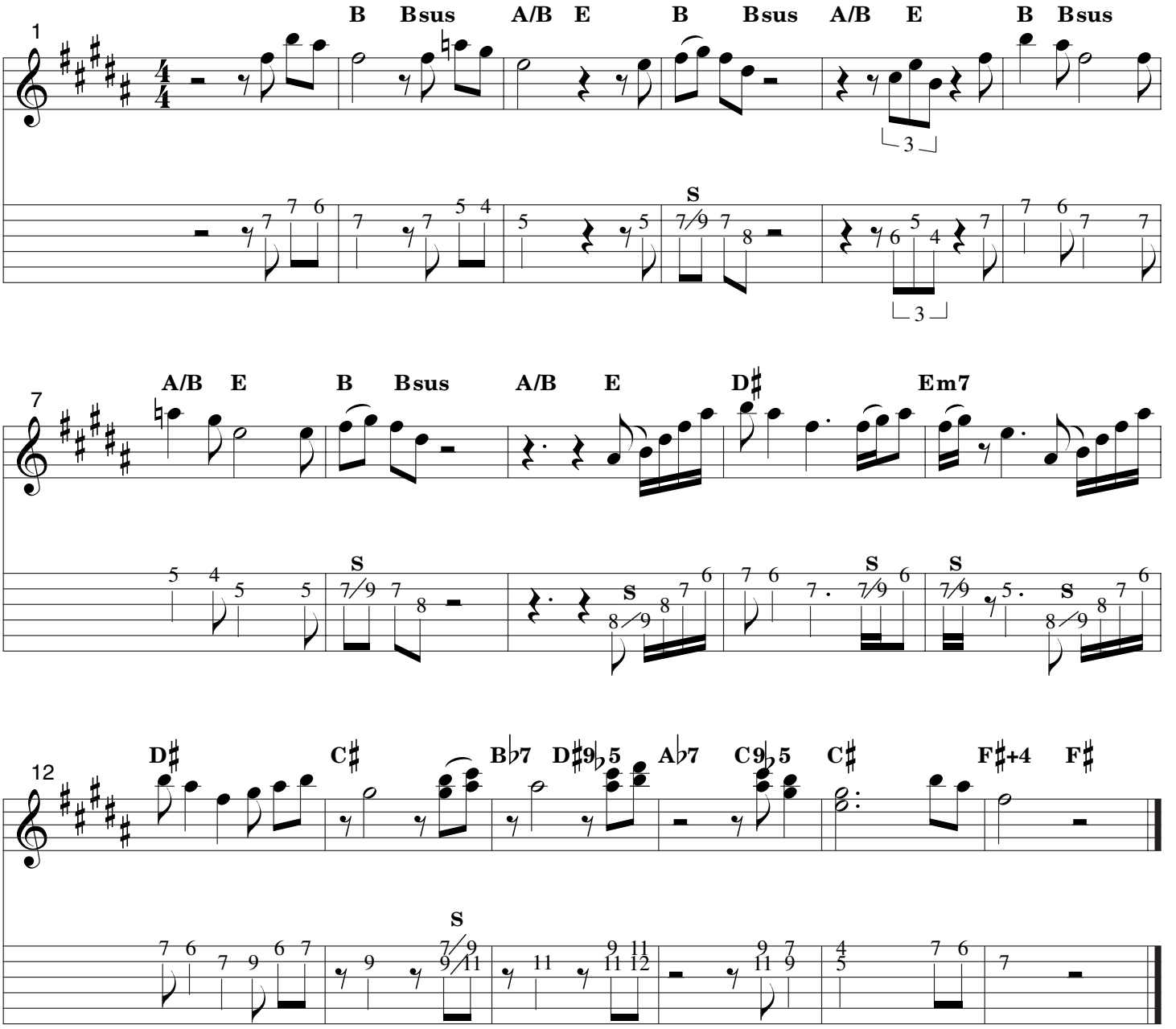
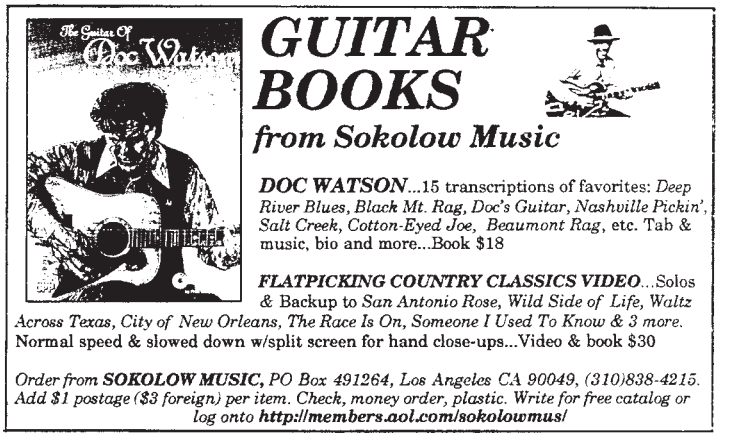
What Would George Think?

Arranged by Mike Scap
Transcribed by Brad Davis


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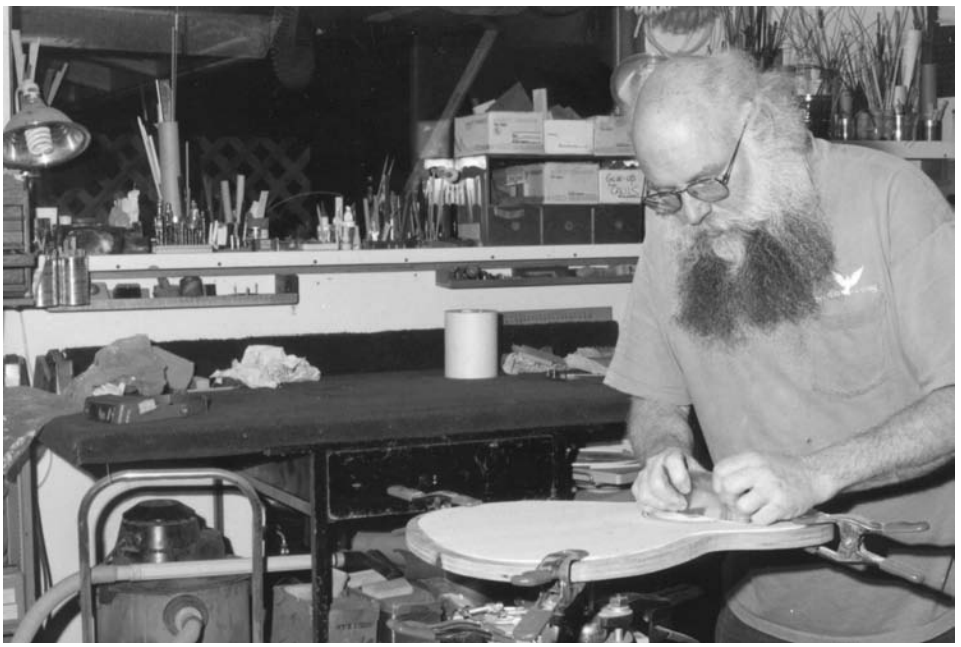
Shanti Guitars

by David Dugas



Over the past 30 years I've spoken with many luthiers of steel string and classical guitars. With rare exceptions, I've found them to have a wealth of knowledge to share on their chosen craft as well as many unique ideas on building their instruments. Some of the luthiers I've spoken with create immaculate reproductions of prewar guitars as well as their own unique instrument designs. Other luthiers craft instruments primarily of their own design, synchronizing with their innate artistic voice to create their own unique vision of musical art. Michael Hornick is one such luthier. Michael and I spoke several months back and my intended 60-minute phone call lasted nearly 3 hours!

Needless to say, because of space constraints this printed article cannot contain the complete interview. We've included just the highlights. If you'd like to read the entire interview, visit *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* web site (www.flatpick.com/hornickinterview).

How did you become interested in music and building guitars?

I've always loved music, but early on in my life I failed miserably on a few attempts to learn to play. I can't sing and the easiest course to learn to play is to back your vocals.

I have a friend who bought a Santa Cruz Guitar Company guitar back in 1977. It was their 9th guitar and it was just amazing. The guitar ran circles around his other guitar, which was a Martin D-35. I ended up calling the company and I asked if I could come on a Saturday and play their instruments.

Going back to the 7th grade, I took a wood shop class and fell in love with wood. I was in love with woodwork all my life and I had always intended to be a woodworker. As I procured tools and worked, I loved the idea of figuring out the particular job at hand, but I hated the building aspect of it and all I wanted was for it to be completed. I was never happy with the process. It was kind of weird that I loved wood working, yet I hated doing it.

I was a sheet metal worker doing wood work on the side when I went down to Santa Cruz Guitar Company. When I walked into their shop, I thought "Whoa, wait a minute! My shop is easily as good as this shop. How can they build this kind of stuff here?" That just turned on a light bulb and I thought, wait a minute, maybe this is it? I ended up buying a guitar that day. It was the 19th guitar that Richard Hoover and Bruce Roth had made. That day, a lifelong friendship started with Richard and I got really enthused on the idea of building guitars. He began to share everything with me. He would tell me where to get everything, the books and materials to buy as well as the organizations to join. Eventually I said, "OK, I'm gonna do it!" Richard gave me all the woods for my first guitar, which I'm proud to say, I still own. It's what I play everywhere and display it at the shows and what not. It took a year to build that guitar and I loved the whole process! I didn't get an apprenticeship, but I had a great mentor in Richard Hoover.

Is he your biggest influence in building your instruments?

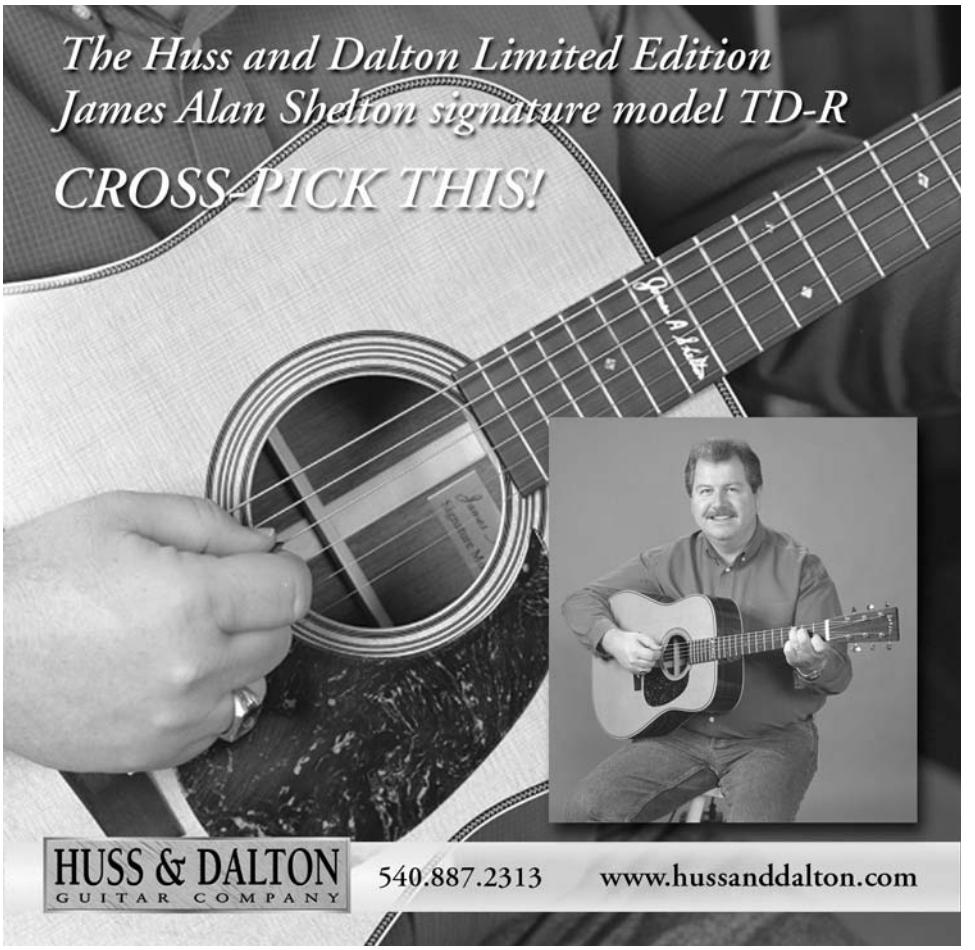
Oh absolutely! My attitude when I was going into that first instrument was "hey, if I can't do what they're doing, I'm not going to do this a second time!" And in retrospect, I didn't get every single mitered purfling as perfect as I do now, but it was a helluva good first attempt. It was the best woodworking I had ever done. I did a lot of things backwards, that today people would laugh at me! I bound the instrument and then I cut ledges inside of that to do purfles. I just didn't know how to do it. There weren't books written in the late 70s and early 80s that really took you through the process. Richard really is my best friend in the business and in relation to being a lifelong thing certainly is my mentor. Jeff Traugot is who I spend the most energy talking with. We have collaborative projects and we are very close, but my friendship with Richard goes back to the 70s. He's the one who made it all happen and supported me. In 1987, when he and Bruce decided that they really should do a small production shop, Richard called me and I ended up agreeing to go down there and I spent 6 months doing their finish work and then training the next person who turned out to be Steve Palazzo, who is my guitar teacher. I think they were building 8 a month by the end of that 6-month period, which was a lot. Jeff Traugot came on board at the time I was exiting the company. So I got a little bit of time inside of a shop.

What year did you build your first guitar?

1984-85. I finished it in 1985. And it was 1987 when I went down and did finish for SCGC. I had already quit my job and in fact I was already hooked up with Telluride Bluegrass and stuff was happening. So, I was off and running.

Can you share the details on your construction of your instruments?

The art of guitar making is, to me, about voicing and tone sculpting. It's the choice of the woods and how you manipulate them; making the bracing and thicknessing and all that stuff to end up at a desired tone. A bluegrasser is going to have different criteria than a fingerstyle player for tone. The shape of the guitar makes a huge difference in tonal qualities. A tight waist versus a soft waist like on a dreadnought changes the tone. My



approach with a player is going to change with the type of music he plays. Then we are going to talk about guitar shape. Do we want a large tight wasted guitar to have the big guitar sound with the small guitar directness? Do we want to do the smaller guitar and shoot strictly for a quiet instrument or do we want it to have a big voice on it? We are going to get some of those initial things, like scale length, dialed in, and then the woods are chosen based on the real priority, which is tone. Most bluegrass players will favor mahoganies and rosewoods, usually rosewoods more than mahoganies. One isn't better than the other. It's really up to an individual taste. The next question is where they are going to use it? Will they want to be in the studio more than live recording or will it be a jam type of scenario?

And then I categorize the woods. For the brightest sound you're going to want to go towards the maples. A little less bright you are going to move into koa. You want to get that nice warm neutral tone you are going to move into mahogany. If you want to start to darken that tone you go it to the rosewoods. And if you want that really glass-like, deep tone, that real ringing high tone, you will go to Brazilian rosewood. And that's going to flavor maybe 20% of the sound. Then, how do you brace the top and what top you choose to go with those woods? There are walnuts and a lot of different rosewoods, not just Indian Rosewood.

There are a lot of great domestic woods that will build a wonderful instrument. However I haven't experimented with many of those woods, because I'm always building custom orders.

In my X-brace, I open it and close it and move it up and down all based on what I'm after with tone on the instrument. So it's not like I have 5 shapes I build with. I don't have a pattern of bracing I use on this shape and a pattern on this shape. It just depends on what I'm after. So I might have a 79 degree X on one, an 80 degree X on another and an 85 degree X on another. One X might be 1 inch from the soundhole and another might be 2 inches from the soundhole. It all depends on the tone I'm after in that particular guitar.

What are you hearing from the different positions of the X-bracing?

I hear different ways to favor volume, bottom-end, high-end—those kinds of qualities. If somebody's a fingerpicker versus a flatpicker. there will be a different kind of dynamic attacking the instrument. I might open the X up or I might just simply slide it up in order to try to pop a little more volume if it's for the fingerstyle playe,r because he's not going to have the same quality of attack

as a flatpicker. Opening and closing the X does much the same thing as moving it up and down; however it changes the way the side parts of the plate work. I think all the parts of the plate need to be in vibrational synch with each other; they need to work together. Tone is what I'm referring to in the building process, not after it's strung up. If you worry about tone after it's built then you are stuck with what you got.

I use red spruce on all my bracing, including back and top. I've played around with German spruce and it's the closest to red spruce. I've used Sitka a lot and I think it is a great, great wood, but I like what I get out of my instruments when I work with red spruce.

I use laminated Brazilian rosewood for my bridgeplates. I really like what it does to the tone. Maple tends to give you a little warmer, softer tone, so it's another tool to sculpt sound. Most of the time I'm going to get what players that I'm building for want from the Brazilian plate. I laminate the plate so that the piece is 2 layers with one layer going cross-grain to the other. This eliminates the possibility of a cracked plate. The laminated plate is the same thickness as my standard bridgeplate. And most of the time when a bridgeplate is repaired, they add material to the plate, which messes with the tone. So it's like "Nope, build that problem out!"

For side braces and linings I always use basswood. Basswood is very neutral and yet allows the color of the wood, I feel, to be more effervescent, more alive. It doesn't do things with the tone. Basswood allows the tone to just simply emanate. Using a tone wood as a coupling device between the plate and the sides and the back plate: once again it probably comes from my mentor's perspective. When I've tried cedar and mahoganies they tend to soften the sound and I don't like that. My playground there has been in mandolins. The playground in the guitar isn't very big because I don't have spec stuff because I'm trying to build a particular sound for someone every time. The exception is that I sponsor Telluride Bluegrass, where I get to build what I want in terms of sound every year. My choice is often going to be in the idea of flatpicking guitar. That's what I do and it's truly my favorite in guitar music. All my instruments are going to be really great across the board. They are going to be really good for rhythm, really nice on fingerstyle with plenty of effervescence and the balance is there. You can play it up the neck and all that kind of stuff.

Please tell me about a guitar you would build for a flatpicker. What you would envision we want?

Most of the time I would be thinking rosewood, with a dreadnought shape. I would use scalloped braces, rather than strictly tapered bars. I want to give it a really powerful clear, clean resonant bottom end, not—"muddy" is the wrong word to use— but nothing that goes in that direction. I want it to be very powerful and to be real direct because I think that's what creates the idea of volume. If you can hear it clearer, you'll think it's louder. I want to make sure that it has really crystalline highs and that it's going to go all the way up there to the 15th and 17th fret because flatpickers play from there all the way down to the low E! They definitely work an instrument out. In most cases I would do a 25.4 scale. Every once in a while they'll want it a little bit longer, but usually not shorter. People that like to do both fingerstyle and flatpick tend to prefer a shorter scale. It has to have enough clarity and volume. The other thing is, and it's something I keep working on, is getting it loud for the player because that's a really big one when you're jamming—you have to hear yourself! If all the instrument goes strictly out the front, you're losing sound from the back and sides and it makes it makes it harder for you to hear yourself.

How are you accomplishing the player hearing more of the instrument?

It has mostly to do with thinking in terms of lightness, vibration, and getting some tone coming off the sides. Sanding to make it resonate and then I'm X-bracing the back. I'm just getting so much better tone across the board...

Wait–you're X-bracing the back?

Yes, as opposed to using parallel tone bars. I stopped doing that a few years ago. I stopped on one of the festival instruments and I just went "WHOA! This is doing something that it hasn't been doing!" which is really projecting without having additional volume; volume tends to hurt tone. So, I'm learning that getting the clearest, cleanest, most complete tone is what creates the idea of volume without losing tone. I think that the braced back has accomplished that task. It allows the back to be more alive and allows more sound to come off of the back. When you play a chord and you touch the guitar to your body, the volume just dies. Leaning the guitar away from your body so that it's not touching your body, or just hanging on a strap, or just lightly sitting on your knee, it is louder. My earlier instruments didn't have that much differential in the volume. The back and sides of the body were giving off sound, but not to the degree that I think I'm getting now. I would say that of all the individual things I've done, X-bracing the back has accomplished the most. It also holds my shape true with less mass, which is part of the reason that I'm getting better vibration. I've also gone to graduating the back, so it's no longer flat. There are a whole bunch of things, so it's not so easy to say what it is you're doing to make it work.

How about glue and neck joint and neck shape, frets, things like that?

I use yellow aliphatic glue for most processes. I use West Systems marine epoxy to glue on the fingerboard and to glue the carbon fiber bars in the neck. I use a double acting truss rod. I have them made and I have the machinist pin the nuts on. When you braze or weld the nut onto the rod you ruin the metallurgy in the rod, so I have mine pinned on so that I have the full structural integrity of the 3/16" stainless in the rod. I have the threads rolled rather than cut, which is far stronger with more integrity in the thread and it's displacing material instead of cutting material away. On either side of the rod I use carbon fiber bars. What I'm doing is making the truss rod work against the bars rather than just the neck. This type of rod compresses the neck which means it bends backwards or it stretches the neck, causing it to bend forward rather than affecting the wood. I've learned to do that to the graphite. The fingerstyle players can do drop tunings and have far less changes occur in the instrument. That makes the instrument more player friendly. I add a little bit of extra carbon fiber from the 14th to the 9th fret. That's where a neck will do the most bending. If you look at an electric guitar neck and it needs a reset that's always

where it has moved. So I've reinforced that area strictly for the purpose of a reset. So far, I dial it in and I'm there. I don't have any issues anymore with guitars needing a reset after 5 years. I really believe it's in the neck, not the body, so that's my approach on the neck.

I use a dovetail joint. I can string up a guitar without any glue at the joint and it's totally adjustable. Now, I've never done a bolted on neck. We don't have hundreds of years to find out if those joints are going to work, but I know the dovetail is going to last for hundreds of years, so with any luck the neck joint will last as long as the instrument will last. I only use wooden binding. I stay away from plastic. Plastic is a vibrational sink. It steals vibrations. So, my theory is any instrument bound in ivoroid, which I used to do, that sounds great, would sound better if it had wooden bindings! I'm real adamant about that.

The types of top woods I work with the most are German spruce, red spruce and Sitka. I love German silver spruce; it's my favorite. I use Western red cedar on occasion for a fingerstyle player or redwood. Redwood doesn't have the same effervescence as the cedars do. I also use koa. I love koa for the top wood. The right piece of koa makes a killer soundboard. In fact I'm doing a collaborative project with my friend Jeff Traugot and I'm doing one for my ex-wife. You really have to be careful with using koa for the top because it really needs to have some properties that koa doesn't always have. It needs to be alive and have some real resonance.

I always use ebony fingerboards because they last as opposed to rosewood. For the bridge, rosewood warms and silkens the tone up and ebony crisps it up; same thing with pins. I use fossilized walrus ivory (FWI) pins because that weight, that material is so much harder than the ebony. When you take a Martin guitar with plastic pins and you put ebony pins in, it'll instantly have better tone. It'll be crisper, cleaner and louder. Everything about the tone will expand. And when you go from ebony to bone or FWI you get another jump, the same way. The same thing with a plastic nut versus a bone nut or FWI. I do bone on the nut and saddle and I do FWI on the pins. Saddles and nuts wear out, and after a while somebody will use cardboard under the saddle to shim it because they won't want to set it up and that will kill the tone! I'm really against that one, but those materials are important.

I'm also a believer in a one-piece neck and I do my darndest to make sure I can build a one-piece neck. Maple has been a catch-22 situation. I actually had a board that gave me 4 one-piece necks. For both maple and koa when I've built those necks, I have to do 2-piece necks, but I much prefer the one-piece neck. I prefer the tonal properties of it and I like the movement characteristic to be uniform. Now, there is another school of thought—that I give full credibility to—that says multi-piece necks are going to be stronger and stiffer and have fewer problems down the road. I'm hoping my graphite boards and truss rod will handle that because I seem to have real good control of my neck now.

Is there a specific sound you are looking for in your instruments?

There's a specific quality in the sound that I'm always looking for and that is absolute balance. I want balance in volume and in tone. I want it to register from the bottom to the top flawlessly. I don't want you to feel like you are jumping into the next zone. I want the tone to always have the "surround sound" effect because I think part of that is the highs pulling the low overtones and the lows pulling the high overtones. But there's also something else happening and I don't know how to quantify it, but let's call it "surround sound." In order to have balance and surround sound other things have to be in place. You have to have a certain amount of sustain, but it definitely has to be balanced, both tonally and volume wise and be able to play it through up the neck. Whether the tone is an explosive tone like I would do for a fingerstyle, or whether it's that real power hanging in there that only happens for a moment in flatpick, I want the tones to have that surround sound and I want it to be thick. I don't want it to be thin and harsh. My maple guitars are bright, but they are thick. They aren't thin and bright.

How many guitars have you built so far?

104, I think. I have to go back and count. I'm never going to be known for numbers, I know that! [Laughter]

Can you tell me about some of the folks who are playing your instruments?

Most of the people who have my instruments are people who have raised their kids, put them through college and are now doing something for themselves. I've got a few big players. Lorin Rowan bought my first 12 string, Pat Flynn got a 12 string, and Larry Keel parted with his, the rascal! [Laughter] There are not a lot of big time names playing my instruments. I think part of it is that I've always had to charge real money to keep doing this. Man, a lot of those artists, they're not making all that much money. It's not so much who has them; it's that when they get them, they won't part with the instruments!

If someone ordered a standard D-28 style guitar, how long would it take you to build it once you started?

It would probably be a 5 to 6 week process. Probably about 2 to 3 weeks to get it into finish. A week to get the finish on, there's the cure time and there are a few days for the rub out, setup and put it together and all of that. So, it's probably a 5 or 6 week proposition from start to finish.

What's your current waiting list?

It's between 4 and 4 and a half years. It depends on what actually gets built. If I say it's 7 a year, I have 32 on the books. If I guarantee myself 7 a year then I'm 4 and a half years out. I have 9 months of the year that I'm building and the goal is that I'm trying to get to one a month. So, right now, I'm trying to build 8. It's just gotta be right. I can't have it out there if it isn't right, so if I blow it I just redo it. All my customers know that once they get on the list it will be approximate and that when it's their turn they get absolutely 100% of everything. It'll take whatever it takes for me to get it right for them.

Do you have a web site?

I don't have one for my guitars, but a friend of mine has one and it includes pictures and info on my guitars. Oliver's web site is: www.oliver-waitze.de/the_fine_art_of_lutherie.htm

You can Reach Michael Hornick at 209-795-5299. His address is:
Shanti Guitars, P.O. Box 310, Avery, CA 95224

NASHVILLE FLATTOP

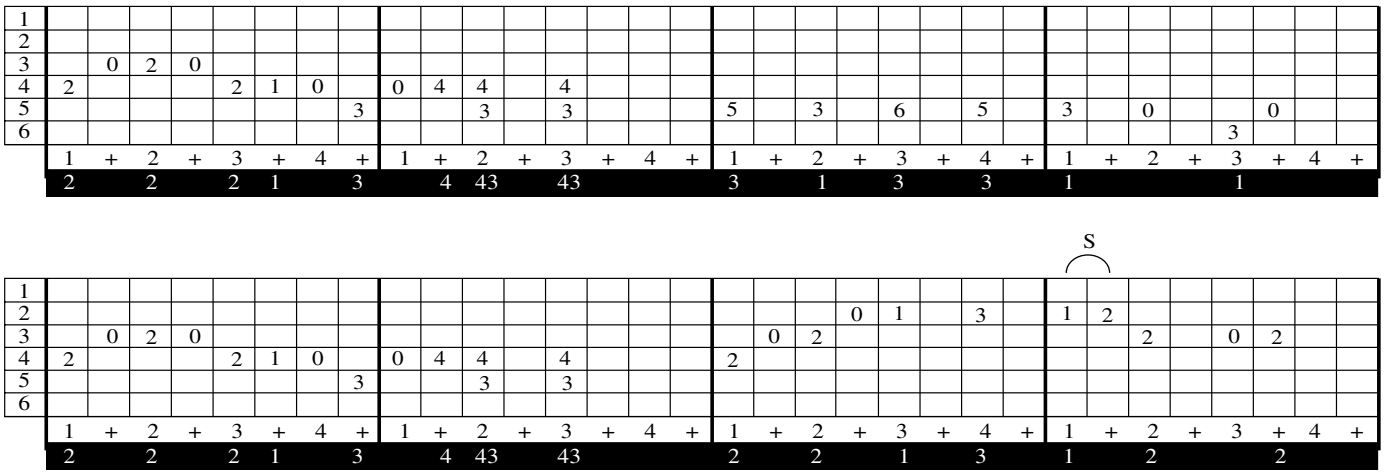
By Brad Davis

Copying Licks

The fiddle, dobro, banjo and mando are all instruments that influence us. Fiddle tunes are the most common example. For years, guitarists have been copying the melody and style of the fiddle through songs that have been around for generations. Below I have tabbed out a lick phrase that originated on the mandolin. It's the intro to a new song now in production for my next record. The lick is not traditional in nature and that is why I chose it. When copying a lick, you need to ask yourself two questions: what key is it in and what chord position should I use when playing it. You should listen for the variety of notes within the phrase as they may range from low to high. Keep in mind that you want to "localize" the phrase, keeping it within a range of frets you can easily reach. If that localizing technique fails, then you will want to play it in several positions. For example, you may start the lick on the second fret and then shift to the fourth fret or even higher if required. This can be both good and bad; it just depends on how fast the lick is and how difficult the note structure is. I will say this that learning licks from other instruments can make picking very exciting! I hope you enjoy it! Have fun and get inspired!

Key of A

Mando lick phrase for guitar



Break Time

by Chris Jones

Christmas Up The Neck

The holidays are fast approaching, there's a chill in the air, and all of a sudden I'm feeling like going somewhere exotic…like the 12th fret, for example.

Some may fear taking their breaks to higher destinations, possibly because you may not be able to get back smoothly. In the bluegrass world, the open strings are home base. You'll very rarely hear a bluegrass guitar solo played in strictly closed positions. That's a big reason we like to avoid playing in open B flat (plus, an open B flat G-run usually provokes laughter all around). We'd rather venture up the neck, using open strings as our passageway back and forth from the first position.

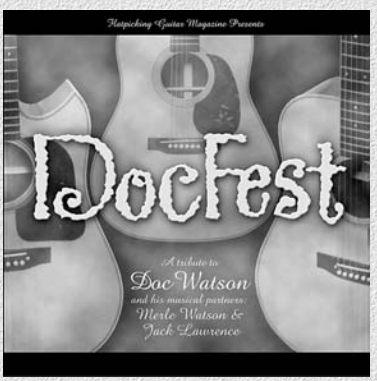
However, it's most appropriate to go up the neck (a) when you're throwing in some sort of hot lick that you want to contrast with the lower part of the rest of your break; (b) when you're playing the melody in a higher octave; or (c) when you've just played the same tune in a jam session 12 times and your own breaks have begun boring you to tears.

To demonstrate this and to honor the season at the same time, I've tabbed out the Bill Monroe Christmas classic, "Christmas Time's a-Comin'." In this case I decided to go up the neck (as in (a) above) because I wanted to throw in a contrasting closing lick after a fairly simple statement of the melody. When I say "up the neck," by the way, I'm not kidding around. Look at measures 7 and 8 if you don't believe me.

When making the transition in hand positions, opportunity is critical. You either need a quarter note (or something longer) to give you time to make the change, or you need an open string, so that when your hand isn't fretting a string it can move into its new position. In this break, I used both. In measure 7, I had a half note (the G note) giving me plenty of time to position my hand so my 3rd finger could hit the next note on the 12th fret; in measure 9, I used the open 1st string (E) to jump all the way back down to first position. That last part is a little tricky, I'll admit (at least it was for me), so it may take playing it through slowly several times to get it to sound smooth. Fortunately, "Christmas Time's a-Comin'" is a bouncy song, not a fast one, so you won't need to work it up at break-neck speed.

I put this in the key of C, which led to a small problem I discovered later. This song is traditionally sung in E, but if you were to capo on the 4th fret, you'd need a cutaway to play the high parts. I'm afraid you'll have to sing it in a lower key than Bill Monroe did, sorry. I don't recommend running out to buy a cutaway just to play this break, unless you're very wealthy, in which case I've got a lot of other things I'd like to sell you. Have a wonderful holiday season.

Our tribute to
Doc, Merle, and Jack



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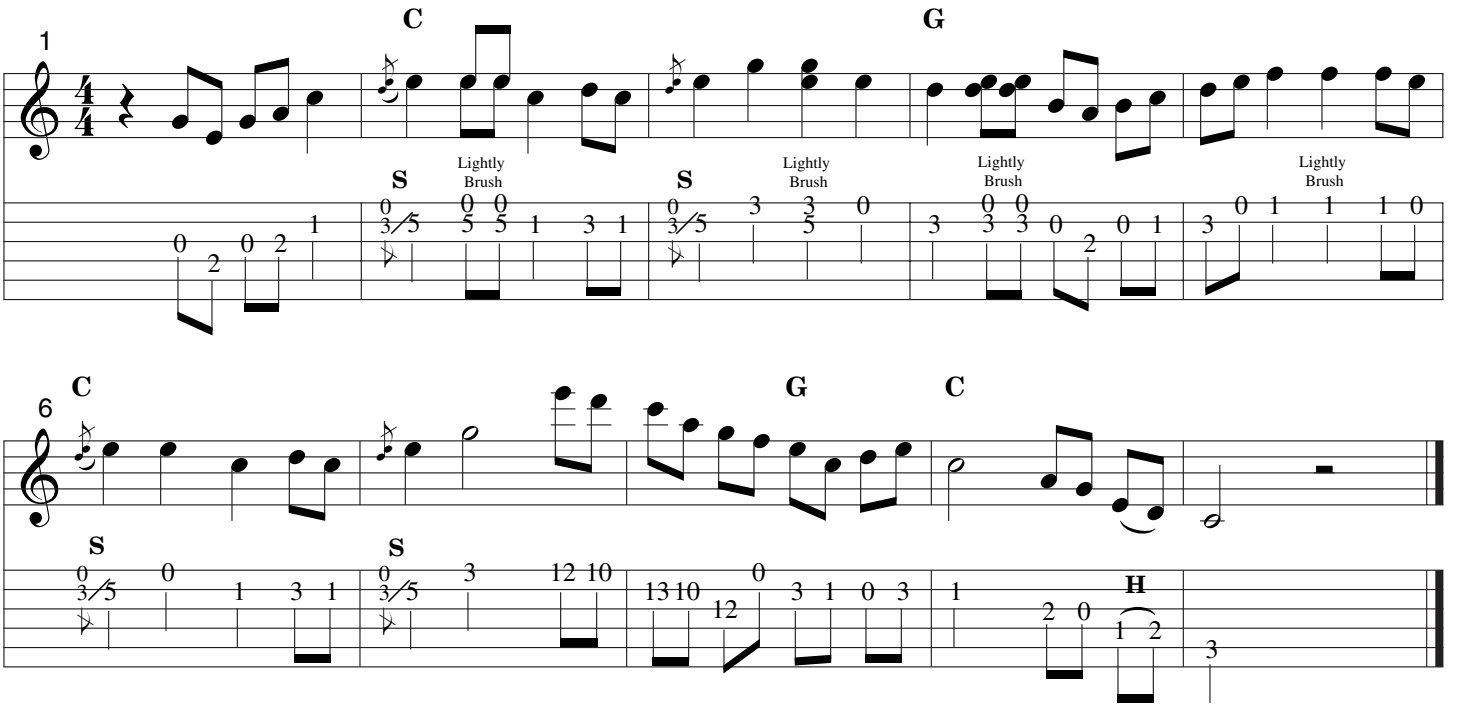

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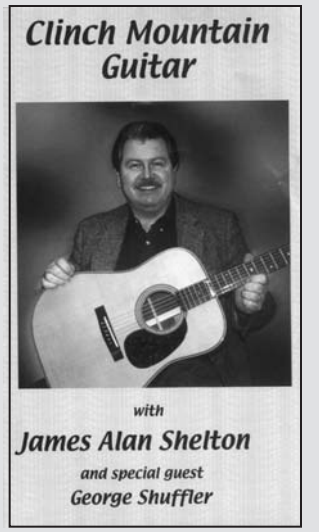

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The Solo Flatpicker

by Dan Crary

The Fundamentals of Chord-Change Runs

The most fundamental thing about runs is that there aren't any fundamentals. There are some guidelines to help, but the acid test is what the thing sounds like and how it fits the context. To put it another way, the best way to create a good run is to be a careful, discriminating listener to music, so when you stumble over or think of a good idea, you'll recognize it as a keeper. And it follows that the best way to get you started creating runs is, well, to get you started creating some of them.

Pursuant to that, please recall some of the assumptions of this column. First, we're aiming to help the solo flatpicker who wants the guitar to sound fatter, fuller, more powerful and beautiful 'way out on that limb called the solo musical performance. Secondly, the best person to teach you to play is you, yourself, with a little access to information and resources. As this applies to runs, the runs tabbed out here are designed to be those that you ultimately don't play, because they suggested an approach to making your own, and those you made yourself sounded better.

The following runs will be a means to demonstrating some things about runs, and from them we can devise a list of "necessarys" and another list of "optionals." The first (Ex. 1) run you see is one everybody probably already knows as the simplest and most basic way to "walk" from G to C. So let's use it as a case in point to observe and think about what a chord-change run ordinarily—necessarily—does. A run:

a. Stays (more or less) within the scale that is common to both chords
b. Is a short tune or melody (you can hum it or whistle it)
c. Ends on the name note of the destination chord
d. Ends on the first count of the destination chord

To sum up these points, if you're on your way to C, a run should be a little tune in the G scale that ends on the C note that falls on the "one" count of the C measure. Every one of the following runs does this.

Then, consider some "optional" things some of these runs do:

a. Ex. 1 (& others) go up from a relatively low G to a relatively higher C
b. Ex. 1 (& others) are three beats long, starting on a "three" of the measure

So the "necessarys" keep you in line and the "optionals" suggest different things to try.

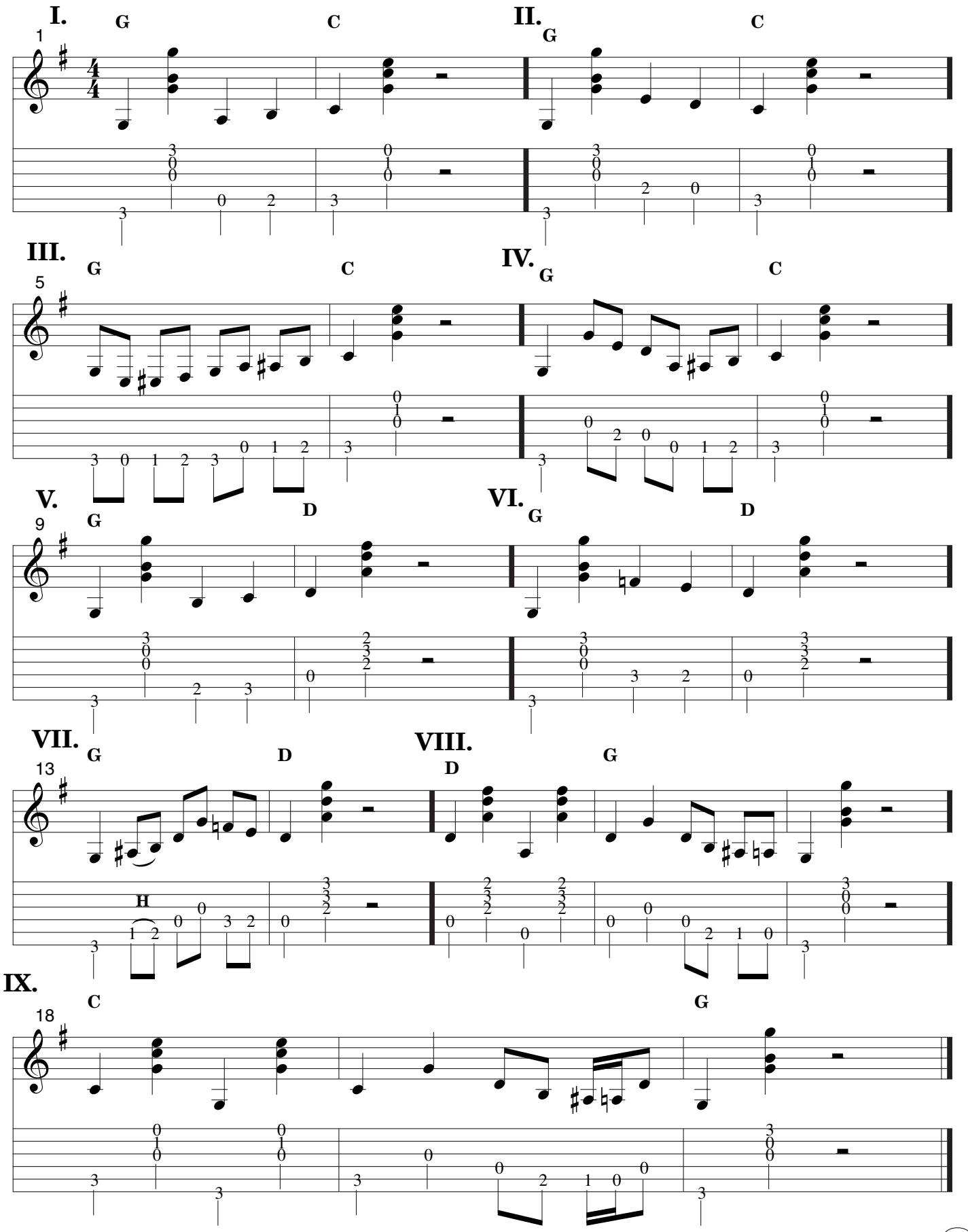
Ex. 2 is an example of how "optional-a" invites doing it differently. In this case, the bass note "walk" goes from higher to lower. Of course, this seems obvious when we lay it out like that, but you'd be surprised how many rhythm-playing flatpickers spend 30 years moving from G to C using the same low-to-high run every time. Ex. 3 (associated with the playing of Doc Watson) takes on the optional point about length and makes the run from G to C longer and quicker. In Ex. 4, the run is sort of up and down, but it ends according to the rules, and as the saying goes, all's well that ends well.

In Ex. 5, we do the standard walk up from G to D, but in Ex. 6 we exercise our option to reverse the direction. it's easy to do, accomplishes the same transition, and the higher-to-lower option injects a little variety. And Ex. 7 (like Ex. 3) just makes the same transition a bit longer and less predictable. Finally, Ex. 8 and 9 use approximately the same run to move from D to G and also from C to G.

Finally, here's a suggested procedure: using one of these runs as a sort of boilerplate (pattern), make up your own run that does the same thing, but includes a variation or two that you thought up. Now stay with the thing, practice it, memorize it, and record it on something like a dedicated cassette or mini-disc (whichever you have) to archive a repertoire of these runs that you yourself created. Then do one more thing: insert it into a tune or song that you already know, something you've got memorized. Make the new run a part of an old tune or song arrangement, so it can become second-nature, and you can reach for it whenever you need a run.

I hope this look at simple chord-change runs gets you thinking about how these little transitional embellishments work, and sends you down the road of making your own. Let me know how these ideas work, and then join us next issue for some hotter, more complex runs of this sort. But before you look at those, try the method here and get more in the habit of finding your own way and less of duplicating other people's. Letting the force move and capturing the moment it does in your own original repertoire of runs will be one of the most satisfying steps forward you'll ever take as you teach yourself to play the guitar.

Please drop in on the ol' website (www.dancrary.com) and also on our web radio show Guitar Renaissance (www.inetprogramming.com). And remember, when I'm old and retired (fifty years from now), I'm going to want to listen to some good guitar music where you guys play some runs you yourselves thought up. So get cracking; but not to worry, there's still plenty of time…fifty years should be long enough for you to come up with some good, original ideas. Cheers, people of the guitar.

Chord Change Run Examples:

JAM TUNES

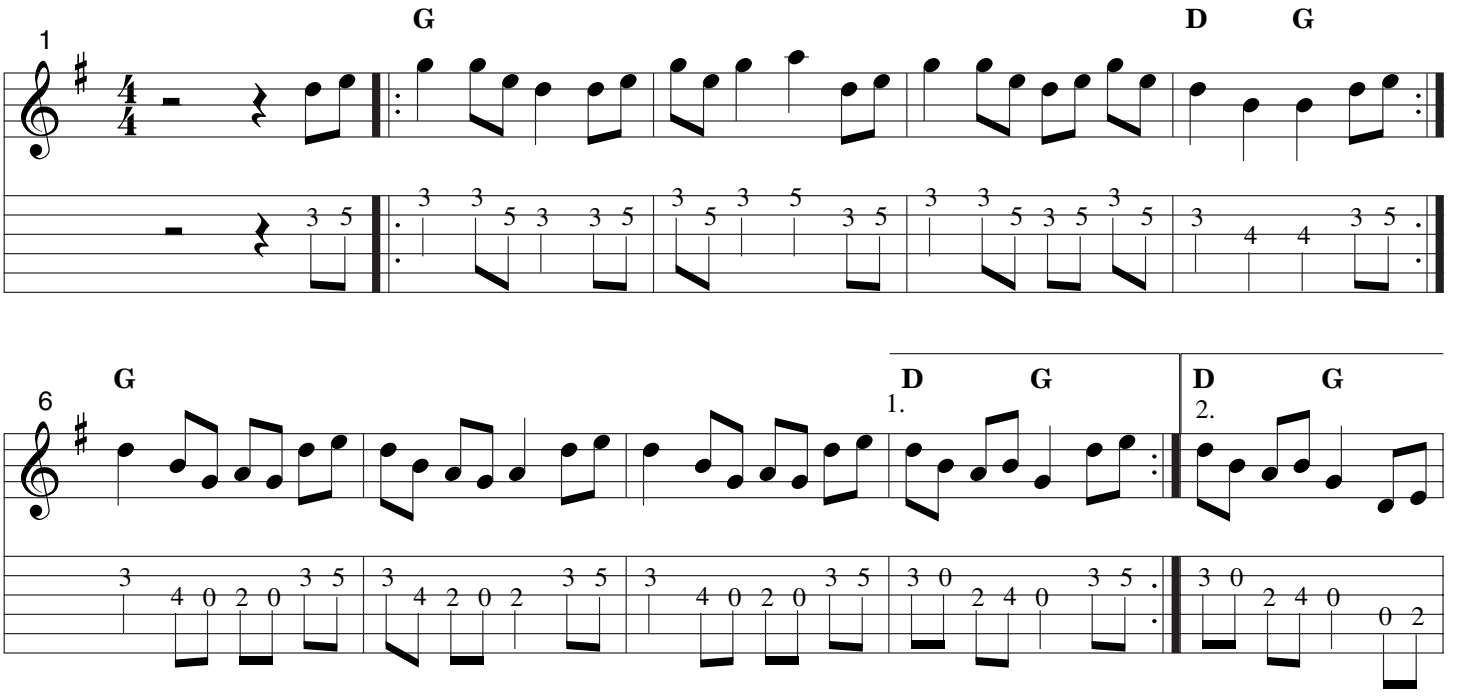
Mark Cosgrove & Richard Starkey
"Little Rabbit"

With this issue's "Jam Tune" we take another look at the playing of our cover story artist Mark Cosgrove. Several years ago Mark and Martin Guitar clinician Richard Starkey released a great recording of flatpicking guitar music on their duo album *Delaware Crossing*. "Little Rabbit" is a cut off of this project. Below we have transcribed Mark's solo which (kicks off the cut) and we have provided the full version of the tune as it appears on *Delaware Crossing* on the audio companion to this issue.

"Little Rabbit" is a great jam tune and if you play through the tab below you will find Mark's solo to be very straight forward. You may wonder why someone of Mark's caliber took such a seemingly simple approach to this tune. When you put on the audio CD and listen to how fast Mark and Richard blaze through this tune, you will understand why Mark chose not to present a fancy arrangement—he didn't have time for fancy!

Little Rabbit

Arranged by Mark Cosgrove



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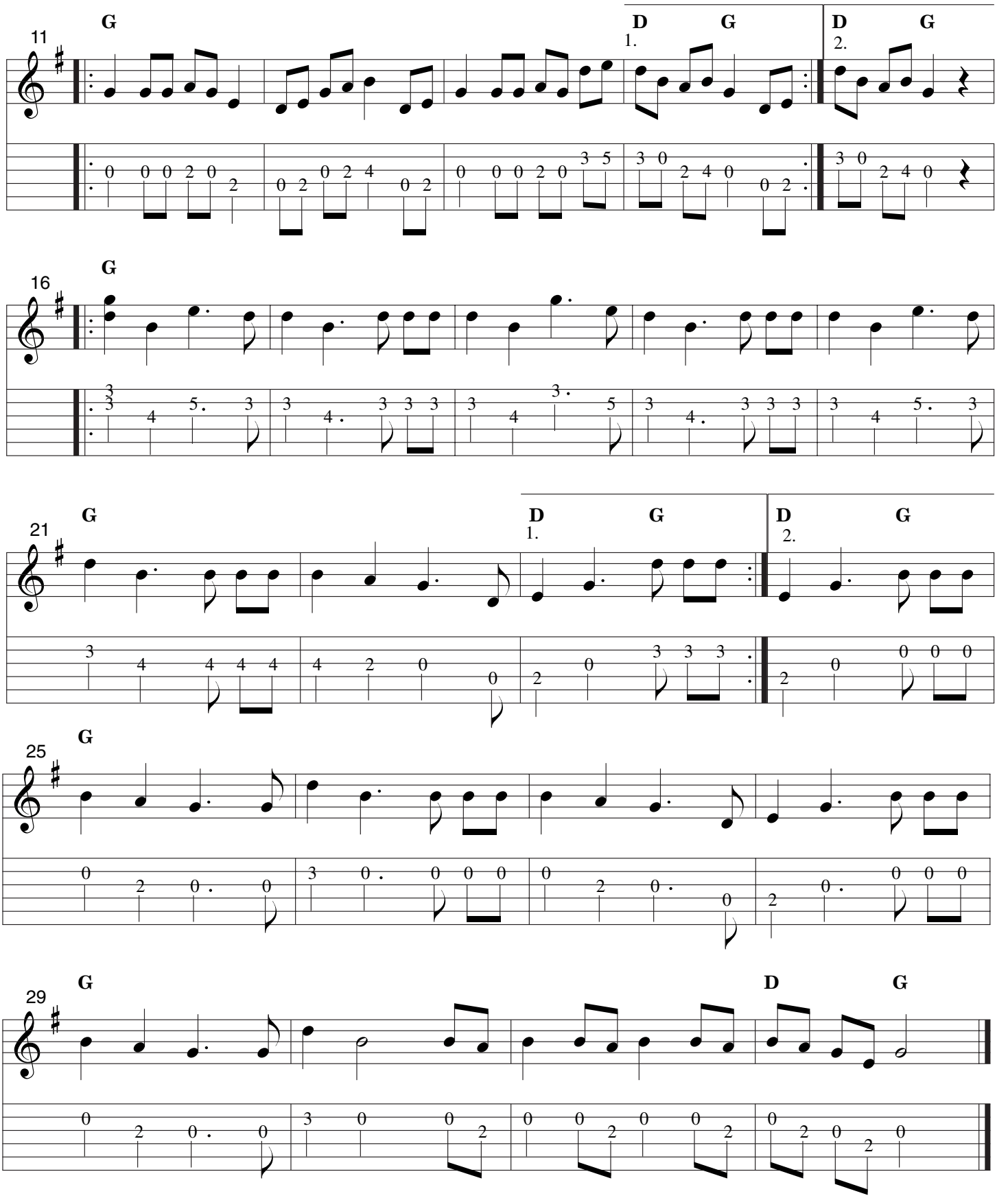
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Gypsy Jazz Guitar

by Paul Mehling

Vibrato

One of the most distinctive qualities of Gypsy guitar playing is how expressive it is. The first thing that strikes most listeners, whether or not they are musicians, is the intensity of the playing. This is most noticeable in the speed and loudness of the playing. But if you dig a little deeper (by listening!) you'll notice a few things that you can use in your own playing to get closer to that Django sound.

This month we'll concentrate on vibrato, the quivering quality of tone that makes the guitar sound like a voice. Because this music was born in and around France, it's no surprise that the most commonly heard vibrato (on guitar or violin) is the very fast, almost "Snow White" sounding vibrato. If you've ever heard Edith Piaf or Maurice Chevalier (or any French singer from the 20s, 30s or 40s) you'll immediately notice the similarity. Conversely, if you've ever heard Django's 1953 recordings on electric guitar, you may notice a curiously slow vibrato, which is very non-Gypsy sounding: Django almost doesn't sound like Django!

So, you can play Gypsy-jazz without the lightening fast vibrato, in fact, players in this style can identify each other's regional proximity (or at least the style they've assimilated) by their vibrato, among other things!

In the meantime, set your metronome (hey, you asked!) to somewhere around 100 and start bending the B string around the 10 th fret or so (somewhere where it "gives" and is easy to push around). Make it go A, Bb, A, Bb, A etc, as though you were fretting the notes. In other words, make it sound like you're actually fingering the notes instead of bending them. As you get stronger and are able to keep the string going without the sound stopping, then speed up the metronome one click at a time. Don't try to go too fast too soon: that's the oldest and most common mistake in the world.

If you try different speeds (quarter notes, sixteenths, etc) you'll find where you are able to vibrato right now. From that point, you want to be able to get the string going continuously (as if that really was possible!). Three or 4 bends is good, and maybe if you're really strong—or have a really slinky set of light strings—you can get 6 or 7 bends before the sound stops. The speed of the vibrato should be the same or similar to the speed of the music you're playing. Listen to a bunch of different music—opera singers, violinists, trumpeters, etc.—at medium or slower tempos and you'll see that the most "effective" or "moving" or "musical" vibrato is one that moves the music along, usually by being in tempo! That should be your goal with the vibrato: to move the music along. A sustained pitch is more than just filling up beats in a measure somewhere in your ear. It has a point. When you understand that, the actual "doing" of it will have a clear purpose in your mind and you'll get there quicker.

Now, that you're bending the string around and really have it under control (say you come back to this part when you've worked on it for a week or two-every day by the way). Now you want to start forcing yourself to do it as a habit. The naturalness will come as you develop the ear for it. Once you hear what a vibrato can do for a melody, it'll always be missing to you if you don't hear it. Once you have that "hunger" for sustain and rhythmic propulsion in your ear you'll be better equipped to practice doggedly until you have it down cold! In the meantime, the forcing practice can be done by playing simple slow pieces already in your repertoire, using an exaggerated vibrato. Overdo it for the time being. See how much is too much. Or, can you do it too much??? Techniques can be tastefully applied or not. It's like tying your shoelaces: until it's automatic you'll have to have days where they're too tight or too loose and you're constantly re-tying your shoelaces. This is all part of the musical process and will make you a superior guitarist. Hearing it is the first step. Wanting to hear yourself do it is the second step. Overdoing it is the third step and the forth step is having people tell you that your playing has something "extra," about it, something almost vocal-like.

Don't tell 'em what it is! Smile, take the compliment and run!

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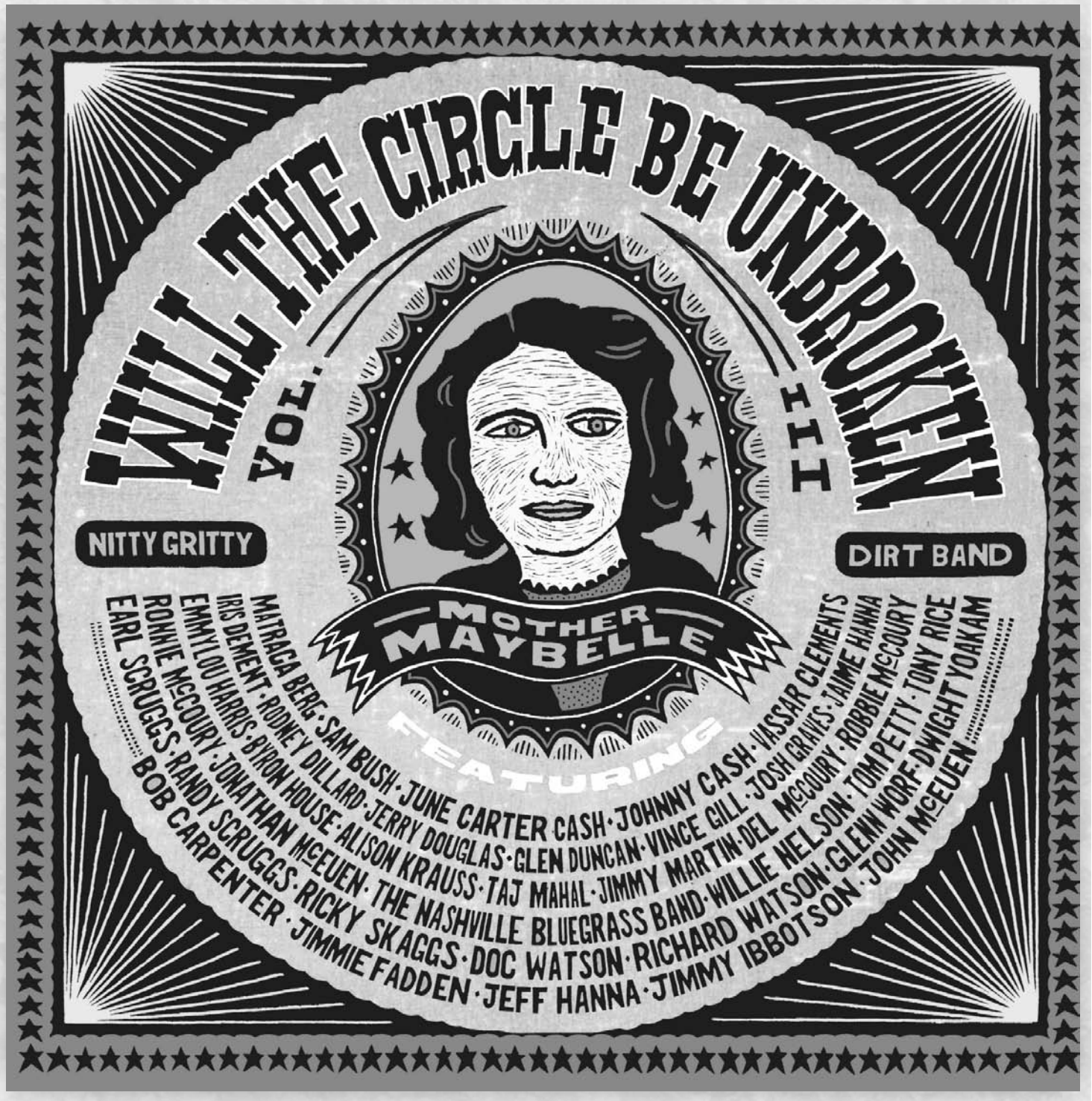
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THE O-ZONE

by Orrin Star

Takin' It Slow: Leather Britches

Just as flatpicking's pyrotechnical propensities can result in speed at the expense of musicality, taking fiddle tunes at slower-than-usual speeds can impart new and interesting musical meanings to them.

One such tune for me is "Leather Britches." Originally I learned it at its normal fast speed like everyone else. But a couple years ago—while noodling in G—I found a very satisfying slower way to render it driven by a droning low G note.

Not to get too "New Agey," but this version feels almost mantra-like to me: it takes me to a peaceful, meditative place. (And though I don't actually perform it that much, I do find myself playing it a lot in spare moments.)

Technically there's quite a bit of crosspicking here as well as some floating (in the high B-part). The main challenge is to let the drone note drone, to keep that G note ringing while you finger the notes that follow it. (I find that using my ring finger for the drone note during the A-part and my middle during the B-part works best.) The other challenge is the strum which occurs after the four opening notes of the high B-part: it's syncopated just ahead of the beat.

Enjoy!.

Brooklyn Bluegrass Maestro, Orrin Star is an award-winning guitar, banjo and mandolin player. 2002 marks his 25th year of doing music full-time. He celebrated this anniversary earlier this year with solo tours of the Southeast, California, and Britain. This fall he will be returning to Massachusetts and also making his first Colorado tour (with dates in New Mexico and Texas as well). See www.flatpick.com/ostar

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Leather Britches

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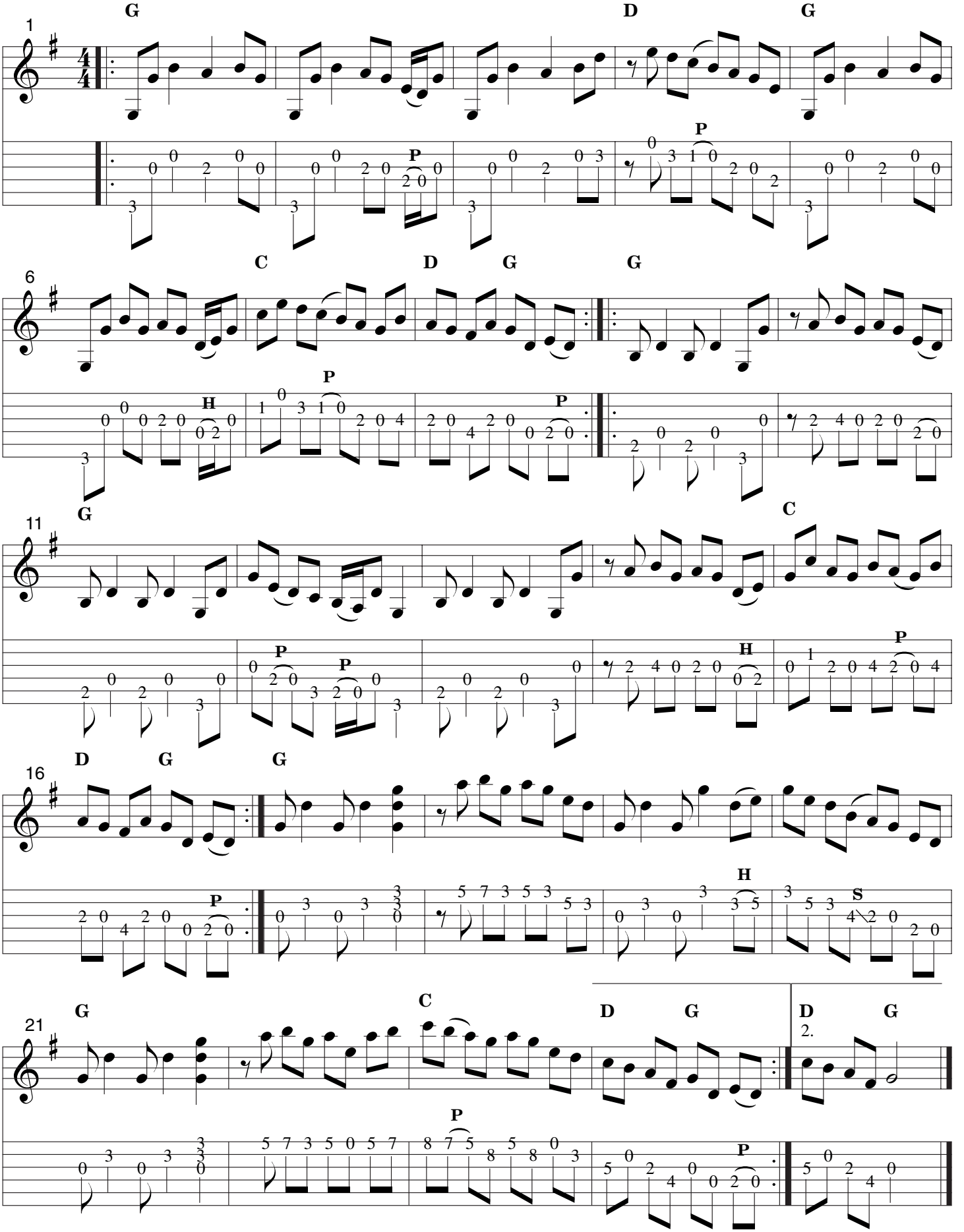

Sketch Artist Bethany Kerr Proves that Practice Makes Perfect

by Dan Miller

Sketch artist Bethany Kerr of Cullman, Alabama, has a story that should inspire any flatpicker who started learning how to play the guitar late in life. Over the past five years I've heard many a frustrated guitar hobbyist state "I'll never be able to play like [fill in the name of any great flatpicker] because I didn't start picking when I was five years old." If that's your attitude, then I'd like you to read Bethany's story. She is proof that you don't have to start young in order to achieve high levels of skill in art. As long as you spend a lot of time practicing, have passion for what you do, and hold a constant desire to improve, you can achieve great things.

Two years ago Bethany's husband, James (who is a flatpicker) awoke one morning and told his wife that he had a dream in which he had seen Bethany as an artist. At that time Bethany had "doodled a little bit" but had never taken drawing seriously. A week later James came home from work with a sketch pad, some pencils and an electric pencil sharpener. He told his wife, "Try drawing something."

Bethany found an old National Geographic and worked on drawing a picture of a bird that was in the magazine. The end result looked okay (much as someone new to flatpicking might make it all the way through "Wildwood Flower" at a moderate pace with minimal mistakes). But James continued to encourage her, saying "That is really good! You have got to keep practicing." And practice she did.

Bethany practiced drawing every day, all day long. "When my first child was born I cut down to just five hours of drawing a day," Bethany remarked. In October of 2000 she decided to move on from animals to portraits of people. "I thought it would be wonderful to be able to capture a person's personality and spirit on paper." When she told James of her intentions, he continued to be encouraging, telling her, "Keep practicing! You are never going to be able to unless you try!"

Bethany (who also plays mandolin and dabbles with the guitar) did not enroll in art classed or seek private lessons. She simply stayed at home and drew one picture after another. After each picture was completed she and her husband would critique the drawing and she would then bring out another sheet of sketch paper and try again. Her first portrait was of (the older) George Bush. She said, "I actually recognized him in the drawing. It was the 'eureka' moment of my life! After this, I decided to devote my full attention to portrait drawing."

The portrait of the former president was pretty good (analogous to the flatpicker getting "Wildwood Flower" a bit faster and cleaner). While nice, it really wasn't up to professional standards. Bethany continued to practice. She drew one portrait after another until she had the confidence to put a price tag on one and try to make a sale. In April of 2001, she sold a portrait for $25.

Bethany began looking at other sketch artist's work on the Internet to get ideas. She even started email correspondences with a few other artists. She exchanged drawings and sought critiques. Eventually her drawings began to get better and better. Bethany says, "Each new drawing became a lesson. I learned something from each one that I drew."

After *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* published the Django Reinhardt issue (March/April 2002), Bethany contacted the magazine and said, "I noticed that in your most recent issue of *Flatpicking Guitar*, there was artwork on the cover instead of a photograph. I am an artist myself, and I would be very interested to do a portrait for your cover." I told her that I would be happy to consider using one of her sketches if she could provide me a sample of her work. In April 2002 she sent me a portrait that she had drawn of Steve Kaufman. I was very impressed, so much so that and I presented this portrait to Steve Kaufman at his Flatpicking Kamp this past summer.

In August of 2002 she sent me a 14X17 portrait of Doc Watson (shown above). This portrait was drawn just two years after she had sketched her first drawing. The improvement Bethany has made over the past two years is remarkable. In that time she has gone from rank amateur to full-time professional. She now maintains a business sketching custom portraits from photographs. During a slow month she will draw one or two commissioned portraits a week. During peek months (before Christmas and prior to Mother's Day) she completes about one commissioned portrait a day.

Bethany Kerr is proof that passion, perseverance, and practice (along with encouragement and support from family) is all that is required to achieve goals in any endeavor. Take a look at Bethany's website (www.sketchesbybethany.com) and I think you will be impressed and inspired. I check the site about once a month and I am continually amazed at her new sketches. If you are looking for a unique Christmas gift, Bethany will be glad to draw a portrait of you, a family member, your guitar, or your favorite flatpicker. You can contact Bethany by email (bluesky @hiwaay.net) or by phone (256-796-7830).

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

by Dix Bruce

We've worked with chord melody arrangements before, usually on pop/swing/jazz tunes with extended chords. In this column we'll learn a simple chord melody arrangement of the familiar Christmas song "Angels We Have Heard on High." Its familiarity will give you a head start on the chord melody technique, as most of you have probably heard this old hymn at least once a year for your whole life.

In the chord melody approach we strum or arpeggiate a chord and end our strum on the tune's melody note. We want that melody note to pop out more than the rest of the chord so we'll give it a little more accent than the other notes. We won't play a chord for every melody note, just most of them.

Look at the music below and familiarize yourself with the chord progression. Put your capo on the second fret. You'll be playing in the key of C, but since you're capoed, the sound will be in the key of D.

Next, play through the melody by playing only the top notes of each chord along with the single notes. Now check out the chord diagrams. These are modified versions of chords you probably already know and I've changed them to allow you to reach the melody notes while holding the given chord as long as possible. As with so many styles and techniques on the guitar, it's important to hold a chord as long as possible to minimize the moves your hand makes. You'll reach non-chord tones by using the closest fretting hand finger available. The small numbers between the music and tab staves indicate which.

The first G chord should be quite familiar and you may wonder why I included it all. Look closely at the specific fingering. It will allow you to reach melody notes not in the chord but in the neighborhood and make your moves to subsequent chords with a minimum of effort. So be sure to use this G and the other suggested chords as you play through the tune. The small "x" under the chord grid indicates that you shouldn't play that string.

Measures 9 and 15 use the familiar "hoe handle A" chord. The second string, sixth fret F natural that follows will be a stretch for your pinky. In M11, you'll play a modified Am chord. It's a little tricky but you have to play both strings two and one with your first finger in order to get the F natural melody note. In M12, the G7 is played with a very low pitched inversion. The chord's flatted seventh, the F natural, is just a major second away from the open third string G note. This gives the chord a hefty bassy beefy sound. (Say that three times fast; no, play it three times fast!)

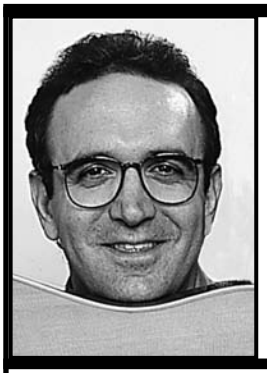
As you play through the chord melody arrangement, drag your pick across the strings, low to high, and end your strum on the melody note. As I mentioned above, give it more volume than the other notes so that it pops out of the chord. Again, the key to playing "Angels We Have Heard on High" smoothly and easily is to hold the suggested chord and work from that basic position as you play the melody.

"Angels We Have Heard on High" works well at a variety of tempi. I like to play it very slowly with a flowing, rubato feel (rubato means "to play without strict time").

Once you feel comfortable with the arrangement as written, try the moving bass line variation below. Plug it in for the given measures 1 and 5. It's not much different from what you've already played. It just introduces that C, B, A, G moving bass line, which gives the passage a motion. Sometimes I play the original in M1 and then add in the substitution in M5.

Happy holidays! See you in 2003.

Dix Bruce's latest book is Shady Grove: Acoustic Guitar Solos by Jerry Garcia. Dix transcribed all the melodies, lyrics and chords to all the songs from Garcia and David Grisman's acclaimed Shady Grove CD (13 official cuts as well as one bonus "mystery" cut) plus all of Jerry's guitar solos and several of his backup parts in both standard notation and tablature. It's available from Musix, PO Box 231005, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523 • Toll Free: 1-877-219-0441 (M-F, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM Pacific time only please) e-mail: info@musixnow.com. A photo of the book's cover plus complete information on its contents can be seen on the Musix website:www.musixnow.com.



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Angels We Have Heard On High

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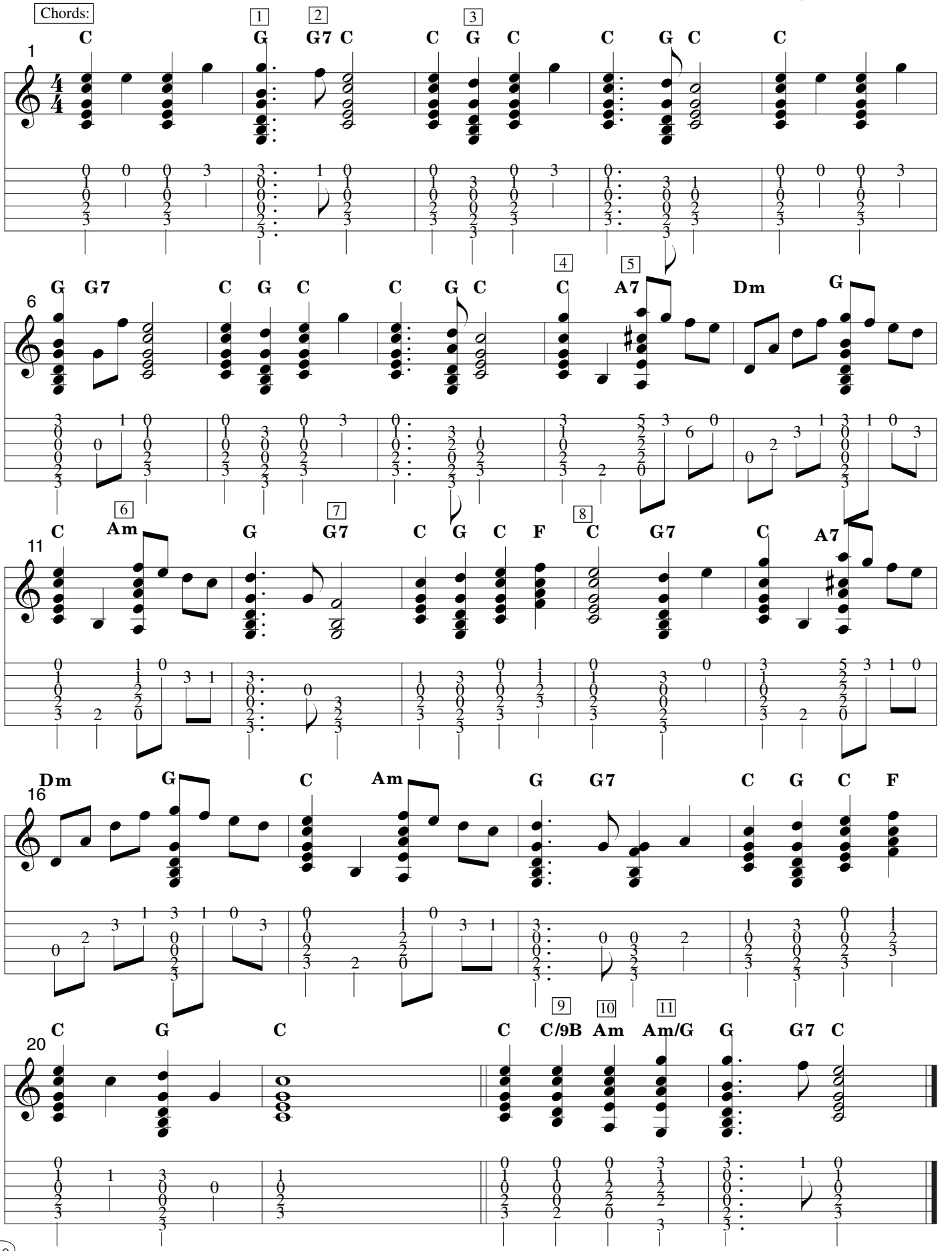
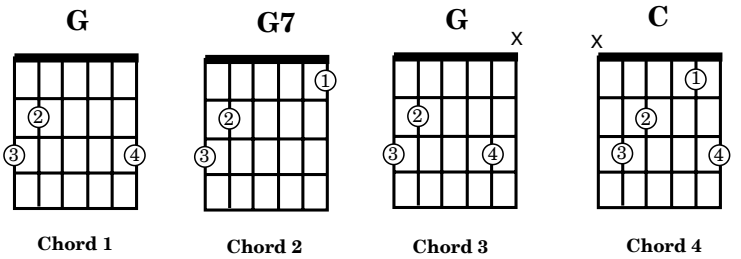

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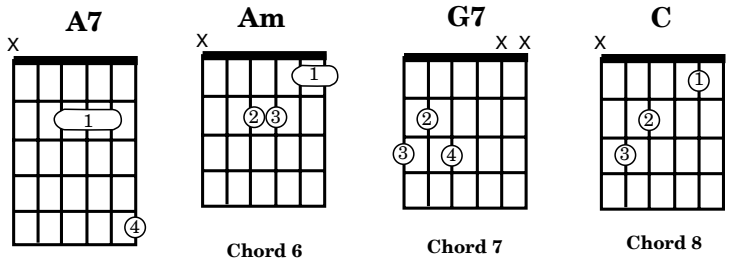

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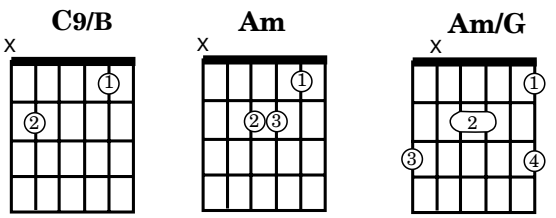

Chord 9 Chord 10 Chord 11

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Flatpicking Guitar

Music Theory:
Mastering the Fingerboard
Technical Studies for Flatpickers

by Michel A. Maddux

Keepin' It Fun!

One of the best ways that I know to have fun with music—that is, to enjoy the experience of creating music—is to play with other musicians on a regular basis. Getting out of the practice room and into a performance situation, whether on a stage with a band, as a soloist, or in jam sessions large and small, helps keep the fun in making music.

We all need to take the time to woodshed: time to take songs apart; time to figure out new ways of playing a tune; time to create a new arrangement; and time to clean up that one lick in a tune that is not quite ready for prime time. I use my time in the practice room in several different ways: to work up new songs and tunes, to keep working on my timing and to polish tunes that I already know.

After all that work in the practice room, the real test comes when you get into a jamming or performance situation and find out whether the tune is really ready.

To ensure that you have a song ready to play all the way through, I suggest that you spend some portion of every practice session polishing tunes that you already know.

After you have worked through new fingerings and new variations, play through tunes that you know with a metronome. Ensure that you can play them smoothly up to tempo, without stopping.

To stay sharp, keep a list of tunes that you have already mastered and play through the entire list on a regular basis. Each day we must learn and master new material, and each day continually polish the repertoire.

New Chord Inversions

We first looked at cross-picking inversions of the C major triad in the Nov/Dec 2002 issue of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*.

As a refresher, the term "inversion" means to change the order of notes in a chord. If you don't recall the C inversion, dig out the previous issue. Keep going back over the material; every lesson is important.

The basic triad in root order contains the notes 1-3-5 of the chord. If the chord is played with the third in the bass (as in 3-1-5, or 3-5-1), it is called the "first" inversion. When the chord is played with the fifth in the bass (as in 5-1-3 or 5-3-1), it is called the "second" inversion.

For a C major triad, the notes are C-E-G (or 1-3-5). The first inversion is commonly played E-G-C (or 3-5-1) and the second inversion is played G-C-E (or 5-1-3).

Okay, flatpickers, don't groan so loudly. This really is useful stuff! When the melody note of the chord should be on top, sometimes using an inversion is the only way to get it and still keep the flavor of the chord. Another really great way to use this stuff is to get a slightly different sound for rhythm or for an alternate sound during your solo break.

The exercise below presents the inversions in root position, first and second inversion, using the three starting positions of the F, D, and A major chords, for a total of 6 new chords for each key. To aid in memorization, you should note that the chord forms repeat in a regular sequence. Also, each of these forms is uses three notes of the full chord in that position. Play and think about the full chord.

"Stone's Rag" is a ragtime tune, that folks like Bob Wills and Doc Watson have recorded. Bob called it the "Lone Star Rag". Ragtime tunes have a syncopated bounce that comes from early days of jazz, and from composers like Scott Joplin around 1890s. Many of these tunes use the I-VI-II-V-I change as well as the syncopated rhythmic bounce.

The bounce in a ragtime tune—and the reason for the name ragtime—comes from the tied notes on the "& of 2, 3" count. This is counted as follows:

1-&-2-&--&-4-&.

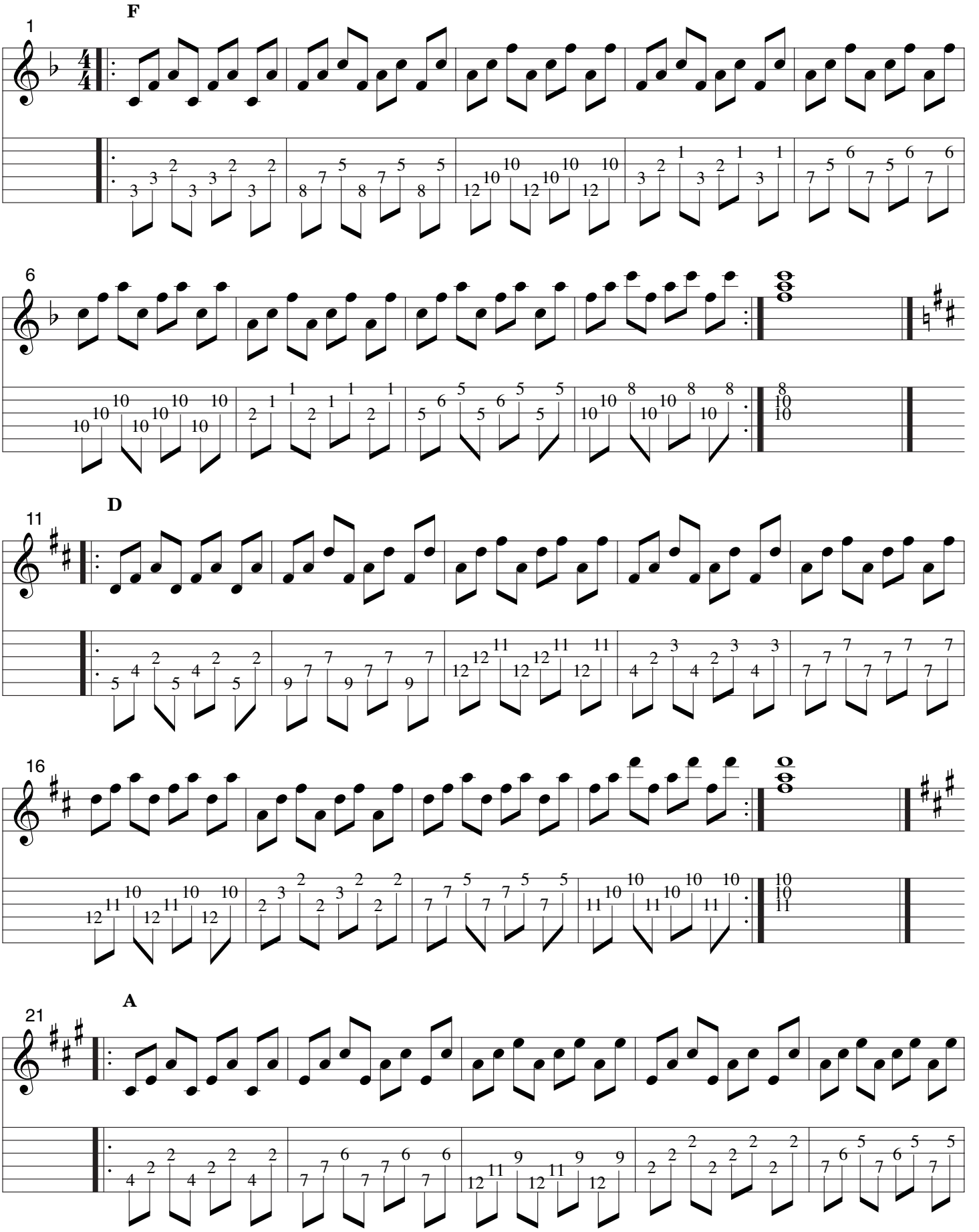
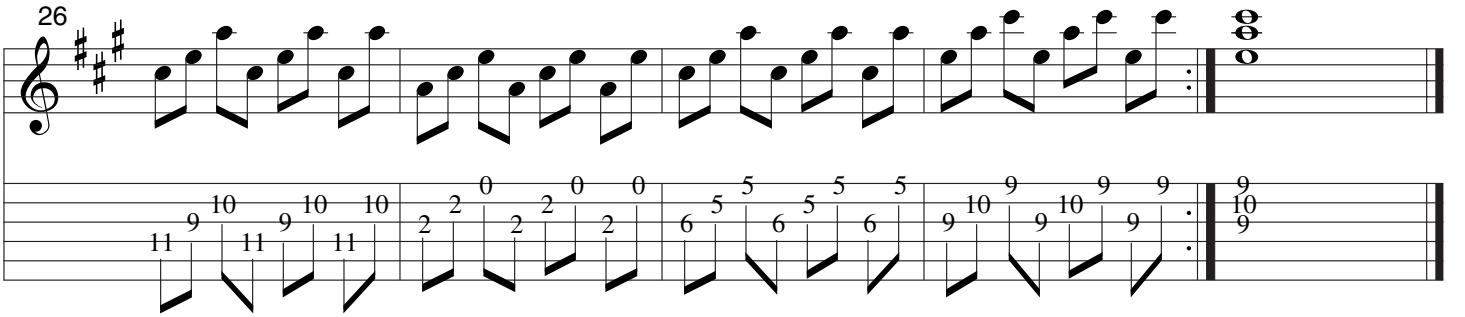
So the notes are three 8th notes, with two tied 8th notes, followed by two 8th notes and a quarter note. This is consistent in each measure of the A section, except the final measure. In the B section, the final note of most of the measures is a quarter note, so that section is counted:

1-&-2-&--&-4.

In the arrangement that follows, I demonstrate playing the basic melody, then substitute selected chord inversions to give the tune a bit of additional color.

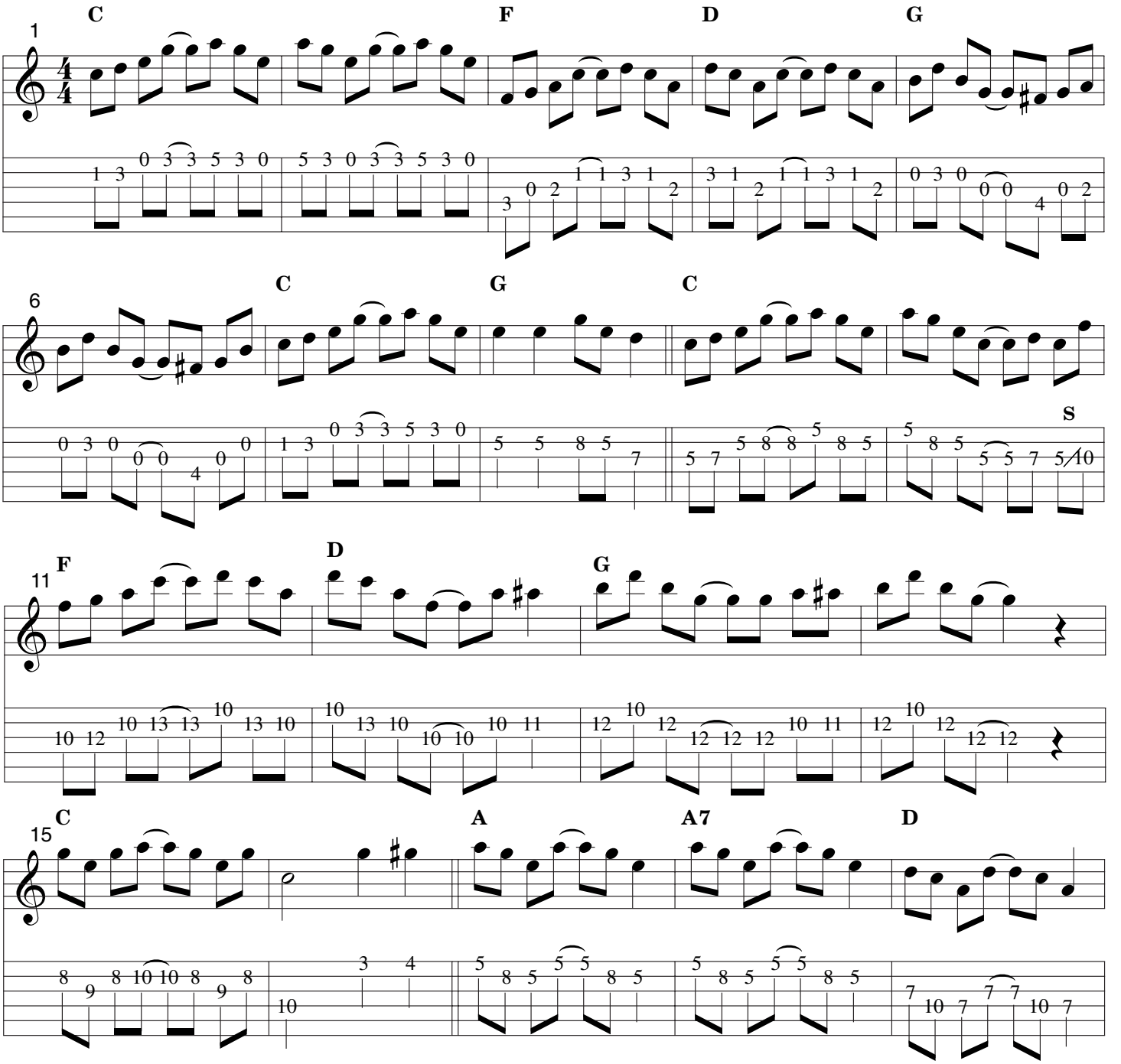
Have fun, and keep on pickin'!

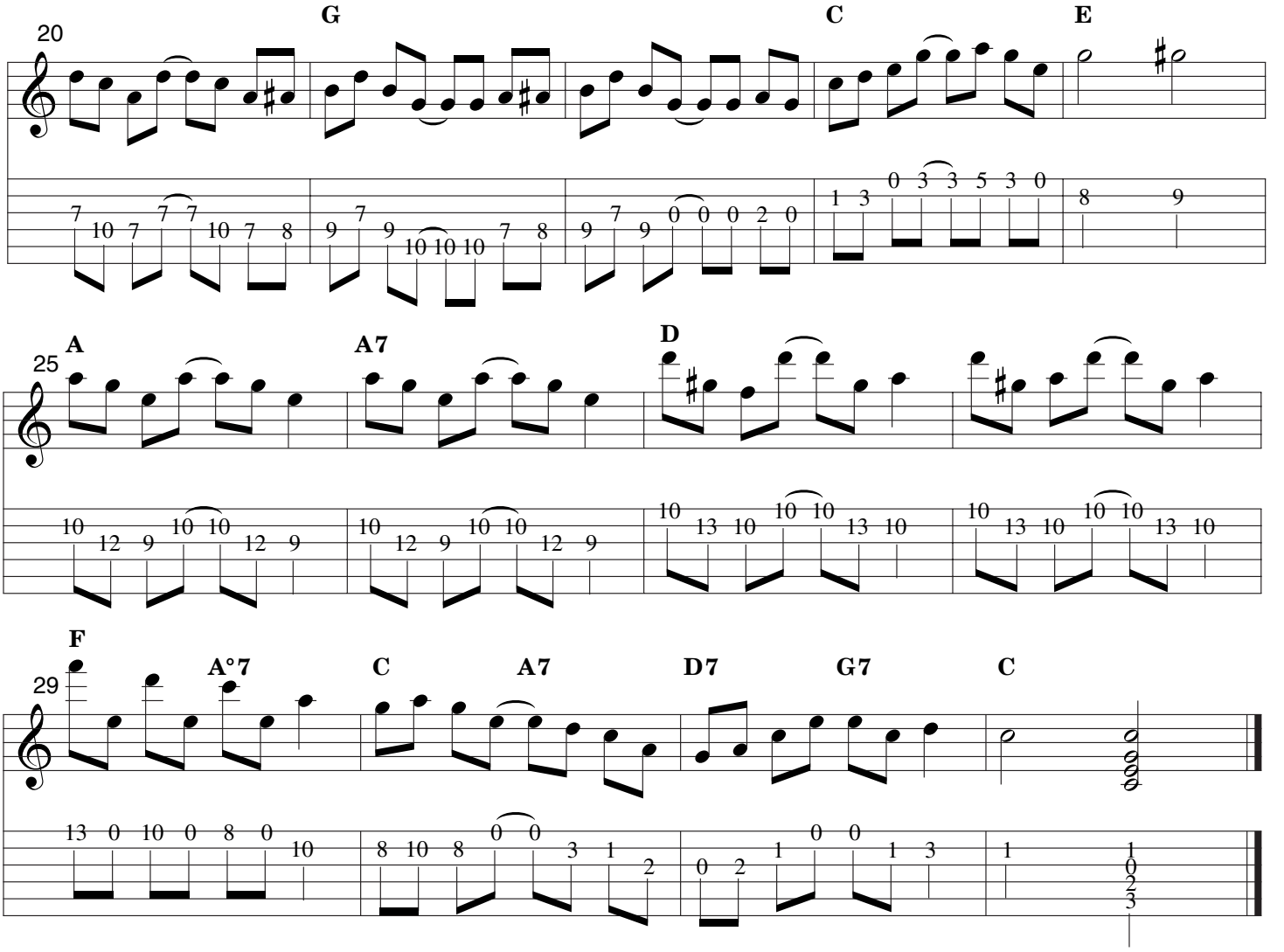
Mike plays music in Colorado and most of the United States with his wife, Bertye, and "The Bertye Maddux Band". Check out their new web site at: http://home.rmi.net/~madflatpicker01/index.html. He is still working on it at the time of this writing, but drop him a note. Check the Colorado Springs newspaper listings for the "Bertye Maddux Band". The Ol Banjo *CD is available through* Flatpicking Guitar Magazine. *Please contact him with questions or comments c/o this magazine.*

Inverting the F, D, and A Chords



Stone's Rag

Arranged by Mike Maddux



Stone's Rag (con't)

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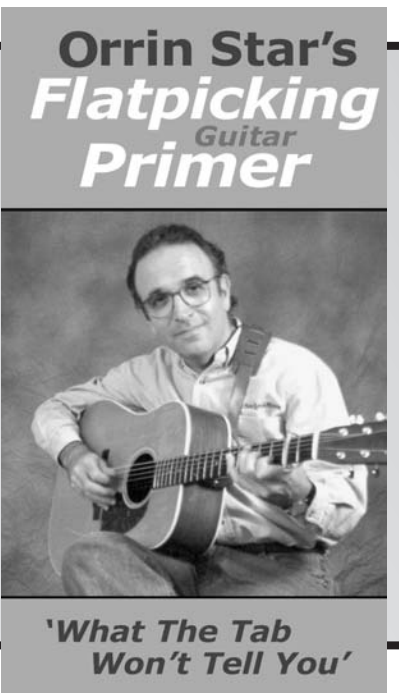


Gospel Guitar

with Harold Streeter

How Great Thou Art

The gospel song this time around is "How Great Thou Art." It's a much belated response to numerous requests from readers. The reason for taking so long to get around to conjuring up an arrangement is that it's such a beautiful composition, so it took a while to decide on a setting that would hopefully do justice to the piece.

The result is a chord/melody arrangement in the key of G with its usual quota (or so it might seem to anyone who regularly reads this column) of diminished chords. In fact, anyone who does regularly read the column may have formed the opinion that the columnist is obsessed with such chords. In a way, that's probably true. Part of it is due to having a jazz background, but most of it is due to gospel tradition being fertile ground for diminished chords, and this is another song in the tradition that really benefits from them.

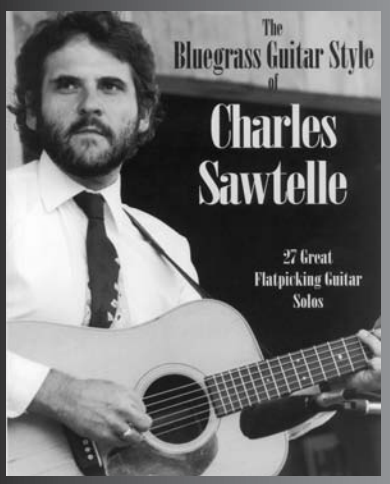
Other items that seem to keep popping up here lately are triplets. They're also part of gospel tradition, particularly in slow to moderate tempo tunes such as this one, because they're handy for maintaining continuity and filling holes created by long duration notes. This arrangement makes use of both eighth and quarter note triplets, with the latter being a little inconspicuous in both standard notation and tab. Those horizontal lines with the "3" written below don't exactly stand out, so keep an eye out for them in measures 7, 13, 16, 22, 24, and 28. Of course, hearing the arrangement on the CD provided for this issue should clear up any confusion in the timing department that the triplets may cause.

By definition, chord/melody arrangements involve lots of chord forms. Fingerings aren't included here for any fretting hand activity, so if you determine that having the chord forms would be helpful for learning the arrangement, please feel free to write me at the address shown here, and I'll send them to you at no charge. (On second thought, if you wanted to include $1.00 to help with postage, I wouldn't turn you down.)

One chord to call your attention to, though, is the G chord which begins measure 18. If you're comfortable fretting the sixth string with your thumb, just hold the top part of the form like a D chord (except at the 7th fret), and hold the bottom note (the sixth string 7th fret) with your thumb. This chord also begins measure 26.

Finally, the ending. Notice that after strumming the open G chord, there's a set of three harmonics on the 12th fret played as a triplet (If you're not comfortable playing harmonics, it's probably best to just end on the G chord). Immediately following the harmonics is the first string 2nd fret. After you get the harmonics to ring, get on down to that note in a hurry and hold it with your index finger. Don't let go of the note as you play the last note of the song (the sixth string 3rd fret held with your middle finger), because it should ring. Altogether, the harmonics and the last two notes make a Gma7 chord.

As always, if you have any suggestions for gospel pieces that other readers might be interested in, send 'em on. When you get a moment, don't forget to pay us a visit at www.lewalt.com. Have a great couple of months!



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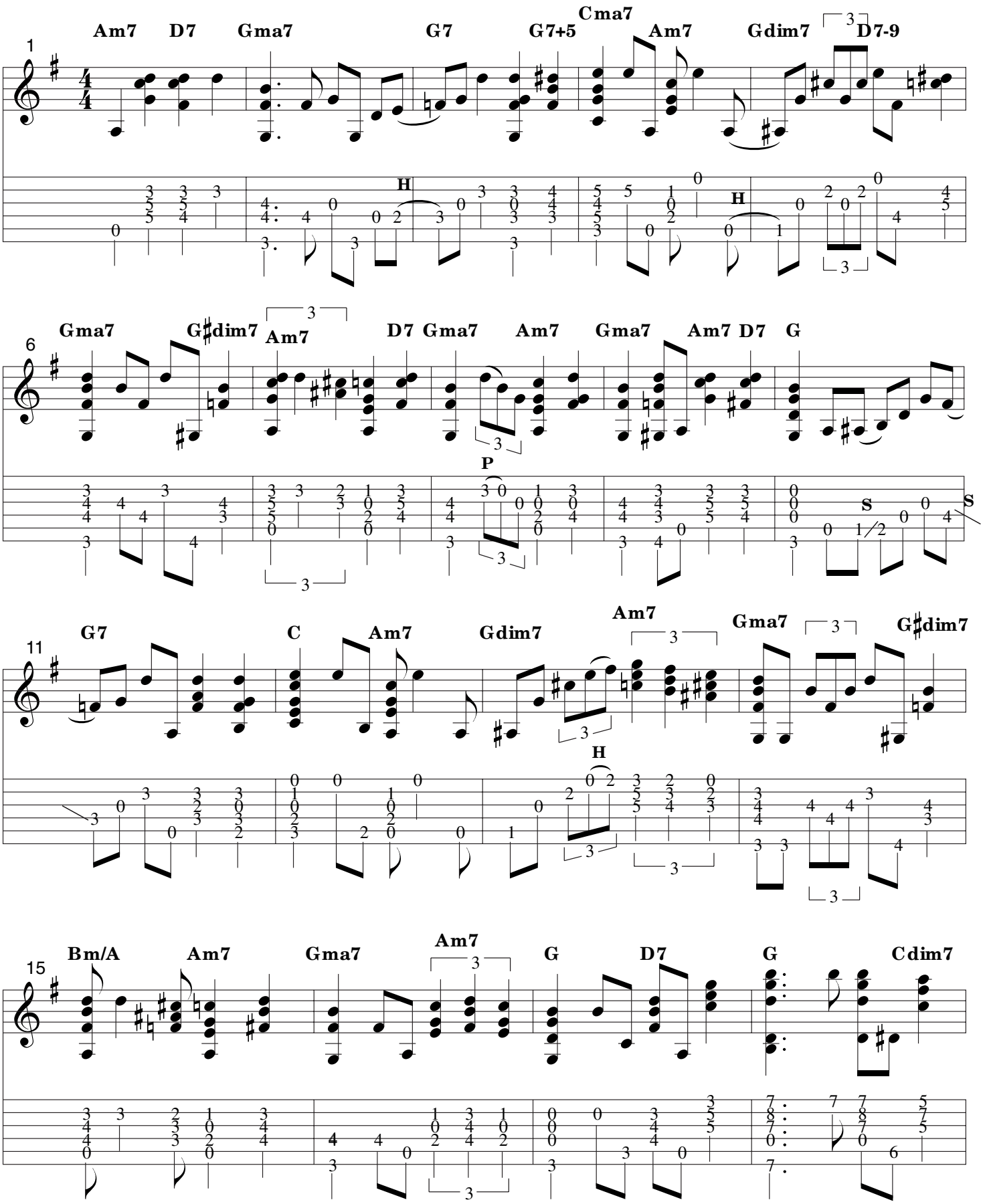
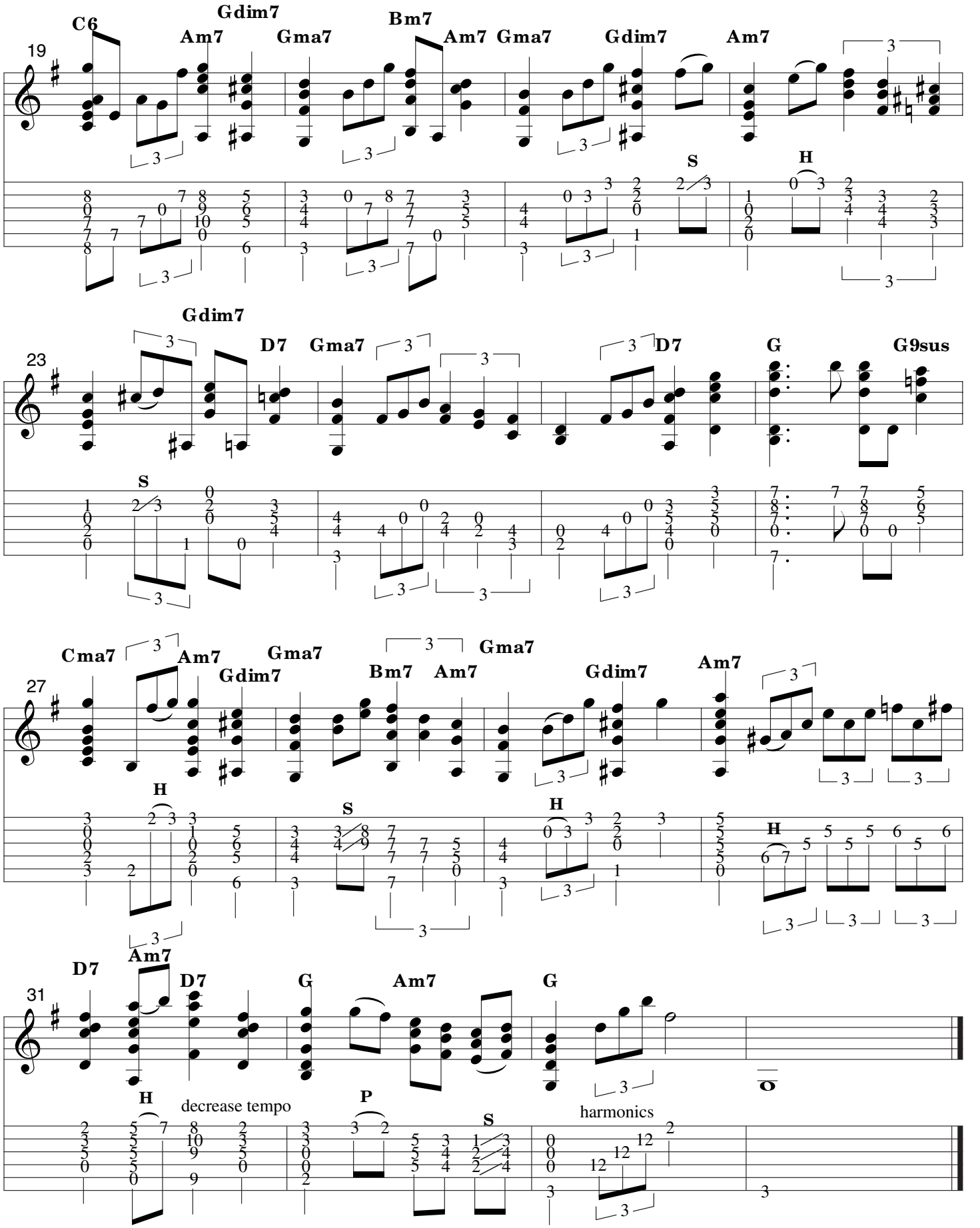

1
Am7 D7 Gma7 G7 G7+5 Cma7 Am7 Gdim7 D7-9
6
Gma7 G♯dim7 Am7 D7 Gma7 Am7 Gma7 Am7 D7 G
11
G7 C Am7 Gdim7 Am7 Gma7 G♯dim7
15
Bm/A Am7 Gma7 Am7 G D7 G Cdim7

How Great Thou Art (con't)

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"Menuet" by Quantz is a Baroque piece which lends itself beautifully to flatpicking guitar performances. I particularly like the flowing feeling and the way the chords progress effortlessly into one another. Feel free to use expression when playing this and vary the tempo as needed. Slowing down and speeding up certain phrases helps give this piece character. As with most all classical selections, the eighth notes should be played evenly and definitely not with a swing feeling! Finally, don't forget to take the DS at the end and repeat the initial phrase.

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Menuet

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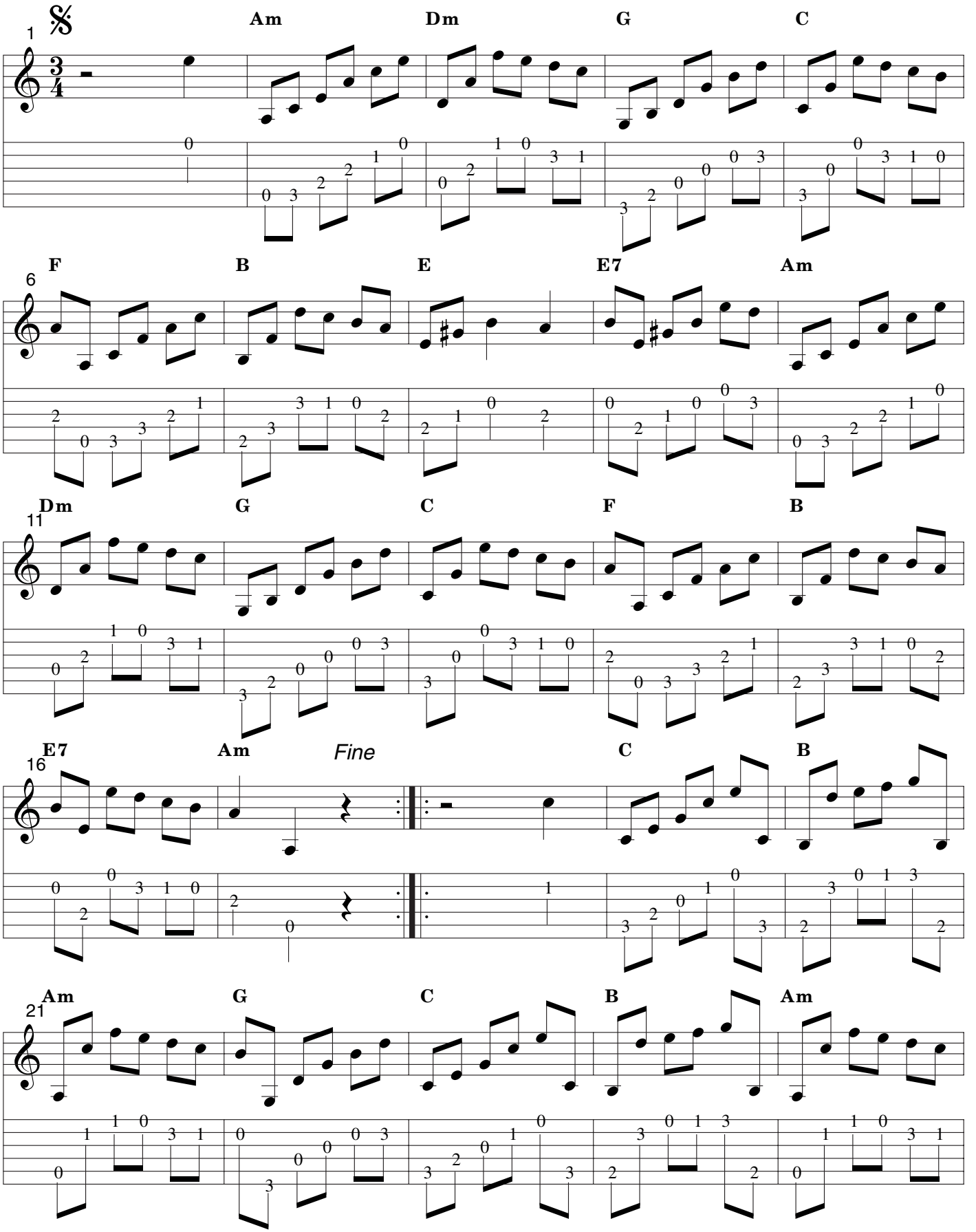
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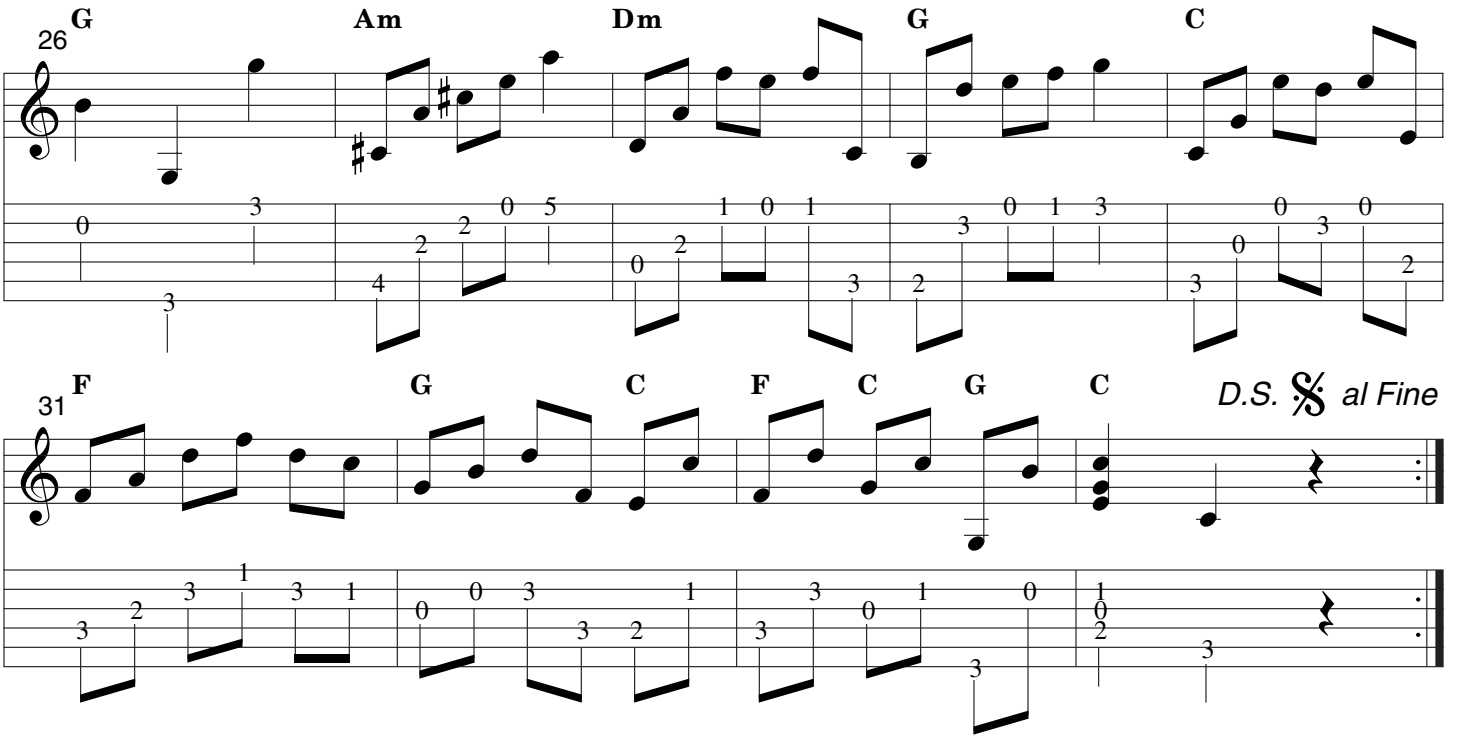
Menuet (con't)



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PICKIN' FIDDLE TUNES

by Adam Granger

THE REDS ARE COMING!

Hi, plectrists everywhere. I'm sorry to start this column off with an hysterical warning, but it's the proverbial dirty job that someone's gotta do. . . Of the twelve or so red-oriented titles in *Granger's Fiddle Tunes for Guitar*, these are three of the, well, reddest (and no, I don't know what that means).

The first is more authentically known as *The Red Lion Hornpipe*, a Bb tune. It appears as such in *Ryan's Mammoth Collection*, replete with reel-type dance instructions. (For a complete and thorough ecstatic waxation of *Ryan's Mammoth Collection*, and especially its currently-available Mel Bay edition shepherded by Patrick Sky, please refer to my clolumn in *FGM*, V3 N2.) I learned it as a G tune called the *Red Line Hornpipe.* Now, I won't belabor this too much, but there's a valuable and, I suppose, obvious evolutionary lesson to be learned here. This new key and name no doubt come from a reprobate hick Okie guitar picker who forgot to put his capo on the third fret (or, more likely, forgot that it was a Bb tune altogether), thus rendering it a G tune, and who then drawled out the title, thus renaming it the *Red Line Hornpipe*. So, having comfortably established the probability of this tune's true credentials as *The Red Lion Hornpipe* in Bb, why then do I herewith present it as the bastard-child G tune, *The Red Line Hornpipe*?* Well maybe *I* was that reprobate hick Okie guitar picker (and maybe old habits die harder than we want to admit. . .).

READING *EASYTAB*

Easytab is like conventional tablature, except that timing notation has been streamlined and simplified. Since fiddle tunes are comprised mainly of eighth notes, *Easytab* uses the eighth note as its basic unit. An eighth rest is indicated by a dot. Therefore, a note with a dot after it is a quarter note, and a note with three dots after it is a half note. There are a total of eight notes and rests per measure.

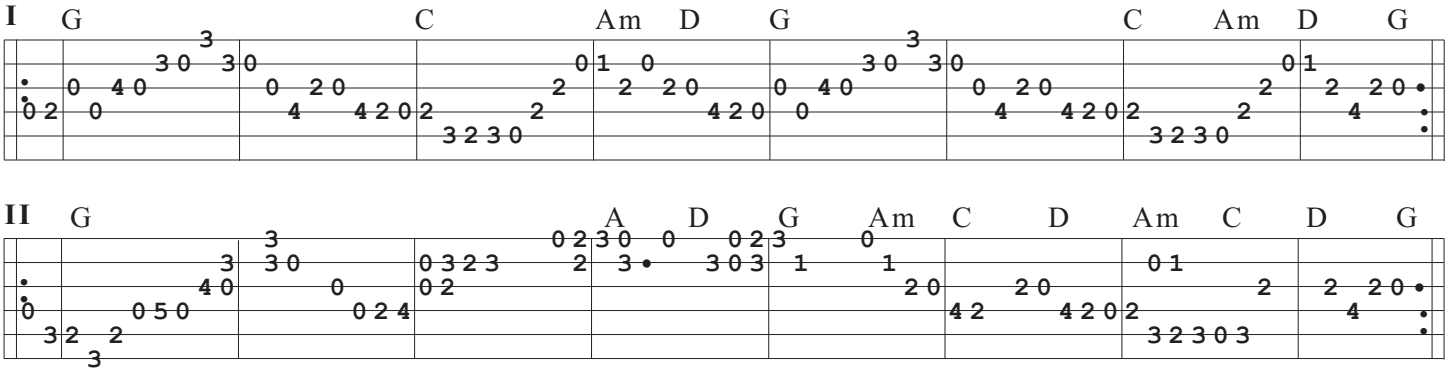
FOR BEGINNERS

Pick with an alternating style: down-up-down-up-down-up etc. The first note of each measure should be a downstroke, the last an upstroke. **Include rests** in this alternating pattern. This keeps you "in synch", playing downstrokes on the beats, so that, no matter what the configuration of notes and rests in an eight-unit measure, the right hand plays them down-up-down-up-down-up-down-up.

The Red-Line/Lion Hornpipe is a fun and challenging tune: fun because you'll hear yourself playing fresh stuff—intervals and themes you haven't played before. These intervals and themes are unusual on the guitar, and they're not the easiest in the world to pick (which, as luck would have it, segues us smoothly and safely to the "challenging" part. The first measure, for example, contains two places where you pick down on one string and up on the string above it, which is one of your more difficult string sequences, dontcha know. There *were* four of them little suckers in there, until I changed the third and fifth notes from open to fretted ones. Oh, and I did the same thing for you in the first measure of the second part. Never let it be said that I don't care about you folks. You can thank me later, and by the way, if you don't know what I'm talking about with all of this down-up stuff, see the cockeyed boxes above right. Okay, time to learn this puppy:

THE RED LION/LINE HORNPIPE

KEY: G OR Bb (CAPO 3)

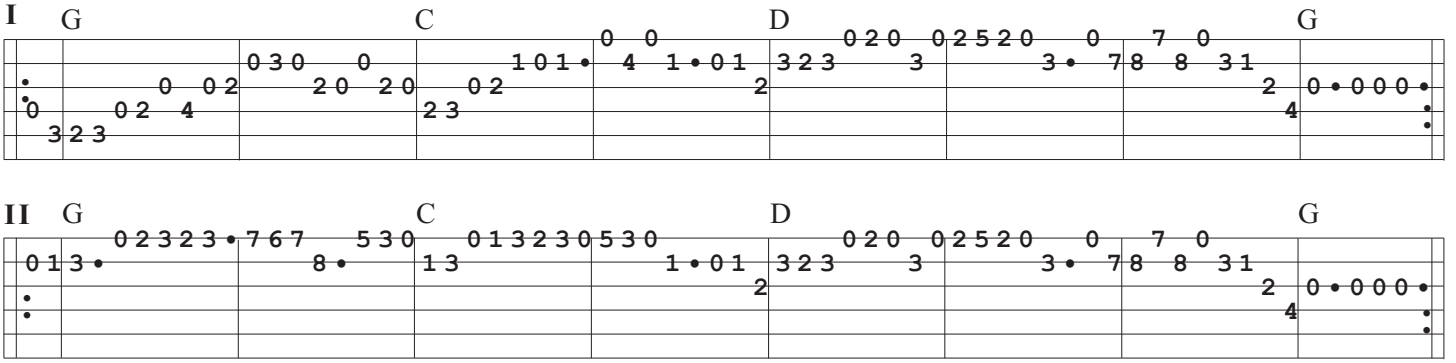


*Winner of the coveted "Diagram *This* Sentence" award for this column

All right, our next *subjet rouge* is a fine old Arthur Smith tune, *Red Apple Rag.* This tune is usually given a Texas treatment, kind of slow and languid. The left hand can switch between the 1-4 and the 2-5 frets through the first part until the seventh measure, when it zips up, floating via the open E string which preceeds the passage, to the 7-10 position to grab the seventh- and eighth-fret notes. The secod part, also, runs up- and downstairs, but is so rest-heavy that this lateral movememnt is not a problem for any of you good pickers out there. Go get that red apple!

RED APPLE RAG

KEY: G



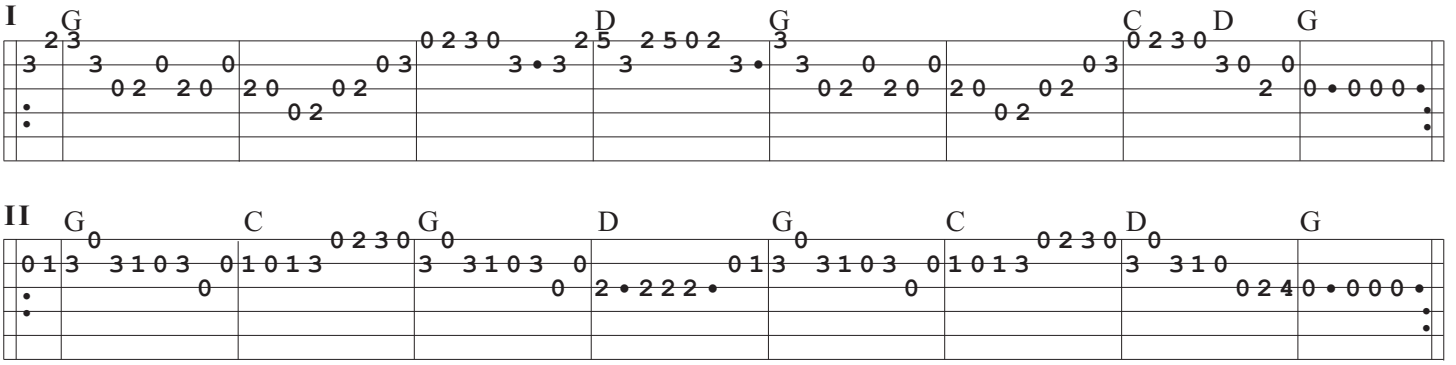
And finally, to round out our terra cotta trio, we've got the venerable *Redbird.* This tune is not attributable to a particular fiddler. I present here the Clark Kessinger version, which defines the melody as well as any version I've heard. Byron Berline and Buddy Spicher have also recorded this gem, along with about a zillion other fiddlers (Well, okay, not a zillion, but a million anyway).

This one of those tunes the setting of which I vascillate over. (That sentence was a lot of work: I set out to end it with a preposition and, by golly, I succeeded!) I present it in open (uncapoed) A in *GFTFG*, but here we dress it as a capoed tune out of a G setting.

It's about a horse apiece in terms of cumbersomeness, and I guess I did it this way in the column just to demonstrate the arbitrariness of capoing in many fiddle tunes. I've talked about this in past columns with regard to D tunes, where capo ambiguity is very common; the question of whether or not to capo is mushier in the key of A. Okay, everybody. Give this one a whirl. I'll wait for you at the end.

REDBIRD

KEY: A (CAPO 2)



Well, there you have some Red tunes to play besides *Red-Haired Boy* (covered in *FGM*, V1 N3) and *Red Wing* (*FGM*, V6 N1). If the Department of Home Security knocks on my door in the middle of the night and drags me away, I expect all of you to come to my defense, and to explain that these are harmless fiddle tunes, and to assure the officials that I'm not strange, weird, bizarre, unusual, or. . .oh. . .never mind. Just tell 'em the tunes are safe and normal. Until next time, keep on pickin!

An incident involving Adam Granger and insects: One night about five years ago, Adam was on stage at Winfield with Dudley Murphy. It was about ten pm, and, in the middle of one of Adam's solos, a large buzzing insect flew up the sleeve of his T-shirt and settled in his armpit. The solo was a total write-off and so was the poor insect which, when it fell stunned and half-asphyxiated to the floor in front of us a few minutes later, proved to be a katydid.

Adam has nothing against insects in general nor katydids in particular; he simply would like them to stay away from his armpits. He is sorry for any permanent damage that my have been done the katydid, and has, since then, attempted to improve his personal hygiene habits.

Exploring Bluegrass Guitar

Clarence White Classics

by Steve Pottier

In the Pines

One technique that Clarence White used more and more as time went on is the drone. This is where you have a note (usually a low note) that you keep coming back to every few notes in the solo. His "New Soldier's Joy" is played out of a G position, with the A note dropped down to G. He often played "Sally Gooden" using the low G note as a fretted drone or the open third string as a higher drone. In this song, Clarence chooses a drop D tuning, dropping the low E note down to D. I play it in the key of E by playing in D position at the 2nd fret, with my Shubb capo covering the first five strings only. This effectively gives me a "drop D" without tuning, and I'm still able to use a regular G chord. I think maybe Ron Block showed me that trick years ago, and I like it!

This version of the song gets a lot of its bluesy feel from the triplet rhythm of the lead. The notes are pretty simple and straight forward—just simple slides into the chord. The drones come in between the melody slides, sort of taking the place of strums. Probably the easiest way to learn this song is to figure out the fingering of the slides, then listen to the CD to get the feel. Tab is not friendly to the pervasive triplet feel, and the rhythm may not be entirely accurate (my fault, thank you, not Dan's!).

I've also included a different version of the song on the audio CD for this issue, offered it as an idea for developing your own drone effects. Same tuning, but I'm getting the melody on just one string—the D string—and using the low (drop D) as the drone. This is another Clarence White idea I've heard him do at a live performance: another simple concept, without being simplistic. Clarence proves to me time and again that great music doesn't have to be fast furious and gymnastic all the time.

Steve Pottier stevepottier@attbi.com

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Amy Brown (Kenny & Amanda)
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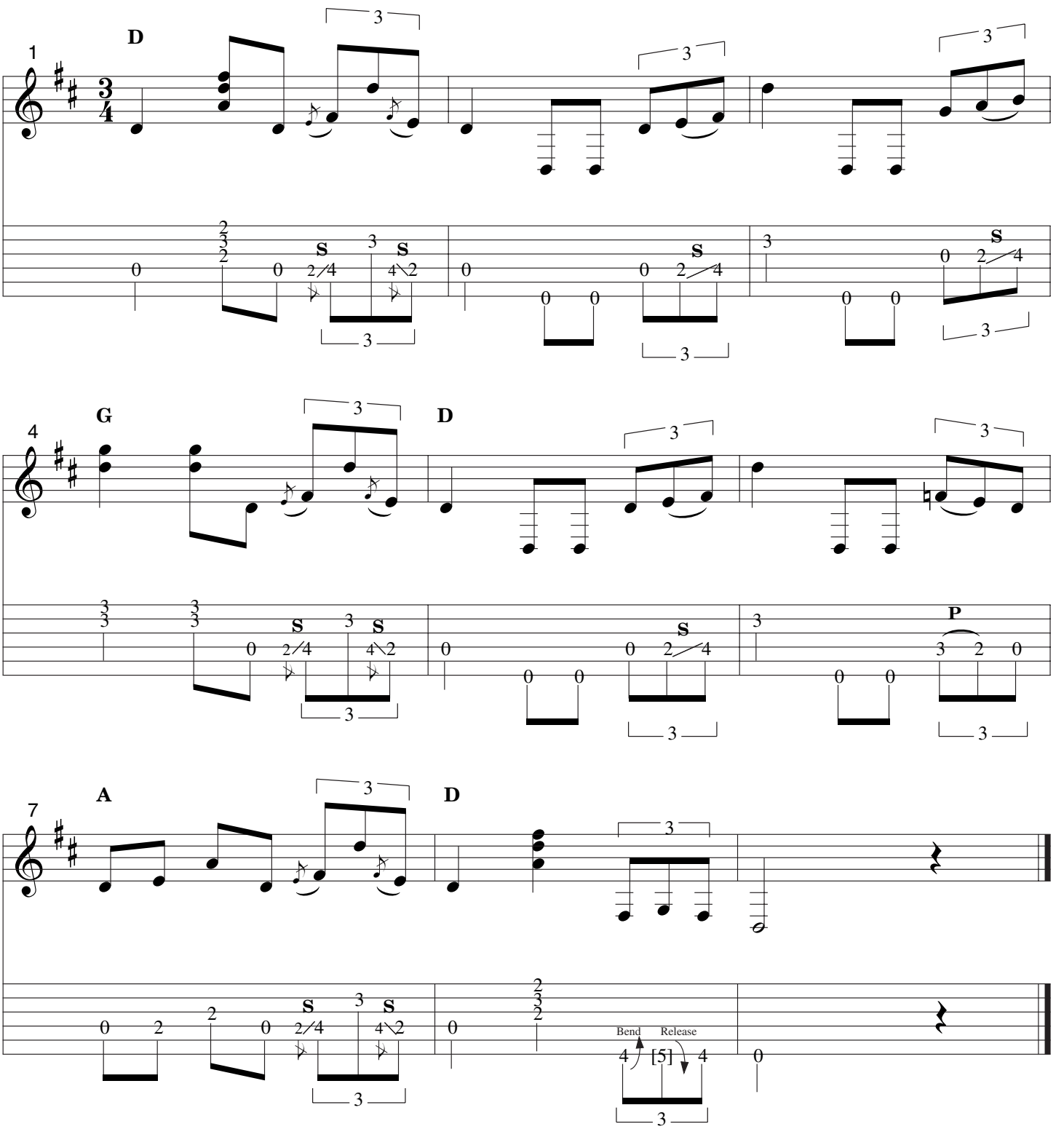
Bury Me Beneath the Willow (Kenny, Amanda, & Wyatt)
Jordan's Reel (Kenny & Wyatt)
Wildwood Flower (Kenny, David, & Wyatt)
Nine Pound Hammer (Kenny, David, & Wyatt)
Big Sandy River (Kenny, David, & Wyatt)
Minor Swing (Kenny, David, & Wyatt)
Black Mountain Rag (Kenny, David, & Wyatt)

In the Pines

Transcribed by Steve Pottier

Winfield 2002

by David Dugas

When I first began attending (not participating in) flatpicking guitar contests in the mid-90's, the aspect that initially impressed me the most (besides the mighty-fine music) was that not only did the contestants knew each other well, but they played backup for each other! I guess I had been in the classical music world a little too long where contestants knew each other, but would never dream of accompanying each other… The competition was…. let's say… much less friendly in that world.

Not so with the Walnut Valley 2002 Festival! The contestants in the Flatpicking competition at the 2002 Walnut Valley Festival demonstrated not only the finest in flatpicking guitar but also the finest in sportsmanship. These are musicians who have, for the most part, known each for many years, compete against each other regularly in other festivals and at the same time frequently accompany each other at those same festivals. The competition this year was particularly fierce with at least 5 previous Winfield winners competing for the coveted grand prize. An example of this camaraderie is a recording that you will hopefully hear in the next issue of the *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* audio companion CD. It's the Rob (Pearcy) and Robin (Kessinger) Show, the Winfield Flatpicking 2002 contest wrap-up. Stay tuned!

The top 5 finalists were Gary Cook, Scott Fore, Cody Frost, Jason Shaw, and Steve Lewis, with Scott Fore, Cody Frost and Steve Lewis making the top 3 finals. Scott Fore placed first (he placed second in 2000), Cody Frost placed second and Steve Lewis placed third. Scott played a very beautiful rendition of "Angelina the Baker" for his tune of choice at the end of the competition. He chose the Collings Winfield guitar as his prize, and received a Pegasus case, a hat, belt buckle and trophy. Kudos to Scott!

Although the contests are the most visible aspect of the festival to the outside world, the campground picking is really the heart of this festival. The 2002 festival was the 31st year of the Walnut Valley Festival with many of the campers attending 20+ years of festivals. In a future piece I'll write in detail about the various camps on the campground, but I'd like to mention a few that are always a source of great music.

Scott Fore - 1st Place

Cody Frost - 2nd Place

Steve Lewis - Third Place

The Carp Camp, run by Dave Firestein, is a haven for the Irish music lover. Dave conducts the participants as an orchestra leader does, shouting out "mandos only,"and "banjos." One of the evenings I listened in at Carp Camp, someone handed out white masks to the hammered dulcimer players. During a tune Dave shouts out "Hawaiian Zombies," which were the Hammered Dulcimer players. This camp is too much fun. I hope to have my Irish music repertoire ready for the 2003 festival, so that I can join in on the Carp Camp festivities.

The Pecan Grove at the Walnut Valley Festival is a sight to behold. This area of the festival comes to life late in the evening and is hopping until early morning. You should not leave the festival without experiencing The Pecan Grove on Saturday night!

Stage 6, as well as Pikes Peak (Charlie Hall's camp) hosts many forms of music including swing, fingerstyle, and gypsy jazz. This year the Hot Club of Cowtown performed at the festival and attended the midnight jam at Stage 6 Thursday evening. Festival pickers who were at the jam spoke excitedly about that jam for several days! My friend Dave McCarty arrived Thursday evening and upon entering the festival headed directly to stage 6 where Alphonso Ponticelli, David Staples, Jean Gimble (Johnny Gimble's brother), Richard and Alana Eager, as well as and many others, were playing Gypsy Jazz. Dave's comment to me about this jam was that (I'll paraphrase) when he heard the music at Stage 6 that evening, he was convinced that the great Dave Peter's spirit was alive and well and being carried on by these musicians. Well said Dave!

Because of lack of space I'm not able to mention all of the camps, but I must mention my home-away-from home at the festival, the Picking Parlor. This tent is hosted by Kenny and Jo Glasgow along with Wayne and Diane Steadham, Jim and Shirley Boo and several other wonderful families. They have hosted this area for 20+ years and are the best hosts imaginable to this runaway picker from Georgia (now in North Carolina). On Friday and Saturday nights you will hear the soothing sounds of three ladies who sing Andrews Sisters tunes and many of the old jazz and swing tunes in beautiful three part harmony. The first time I heard these ladies sing I thought I had died and gone to heaven. Thank goodness I hadn't because I'm able to go back to the festival year after year and hear these lovely ladies sing. What a joy it is! I'll see you folks at the Walnut Valley Festival 2003!

John McGann's Eclectic Acoustic

Laramie Divorce

This is a tune I wrote to experiment with playing in the all-important key of B without a capo. I came up with melody which suggested the chord progression. This tune appeared on the first Beacon Hillbillies CD *Duffield Station* on the now defunct East Side Digital label. We were lucky to have Tony Trischka, Matt Glaser, Gordon Stone, and Gene White guesting with the core band of myself, Jimmy Ryan, and Jim Whitney. A few copies have been unearthed and are available through www.johnmcgann.com at a huge discount.

The melody requires some fingering shifts to connect the various positions—not too tricky, as I use open strings to help make those connections smoothly.

While this tune may not cause you to put your capo up for auction on eBay, it may show you a few possibilities for capoless B playing.

John McGann in a Boston based guitarist/mandolinist/composer/transcriber for hire, currently performing with Rust Farm, The Wayfaring Strangers, Tim O'Brien/ The Crossing, Joe Derrane, etc. John is preparing a video on Irish/Celtic guitar styles for Flatpicking Guitar Magazine.

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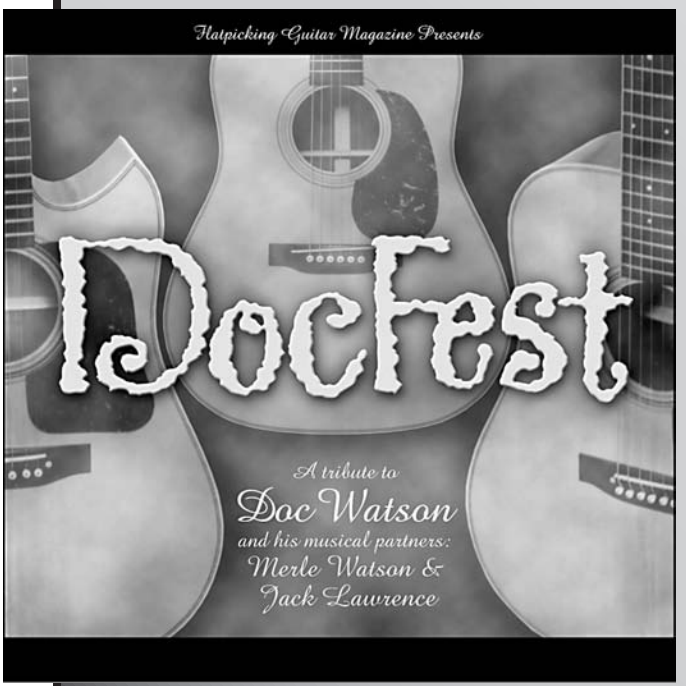

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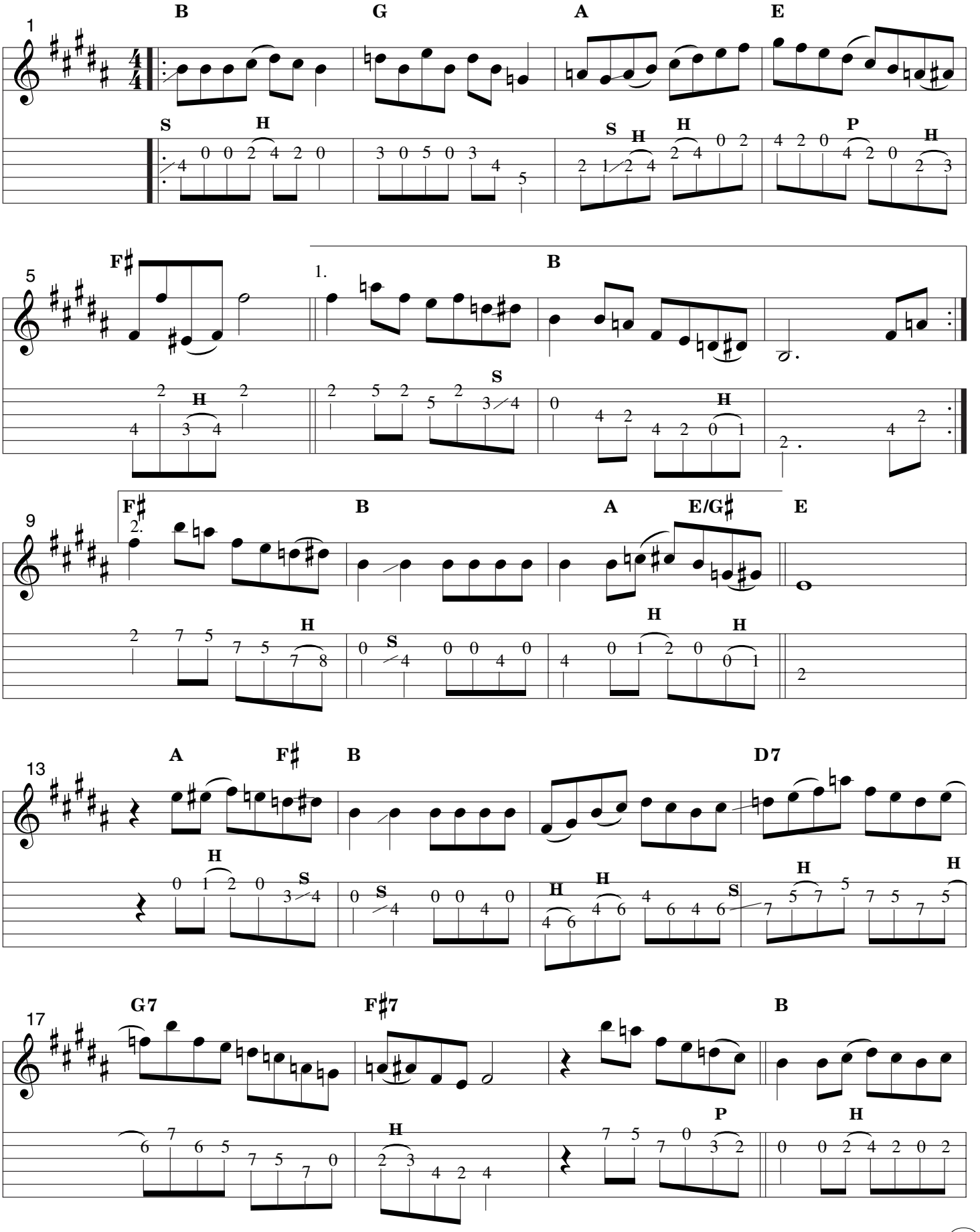
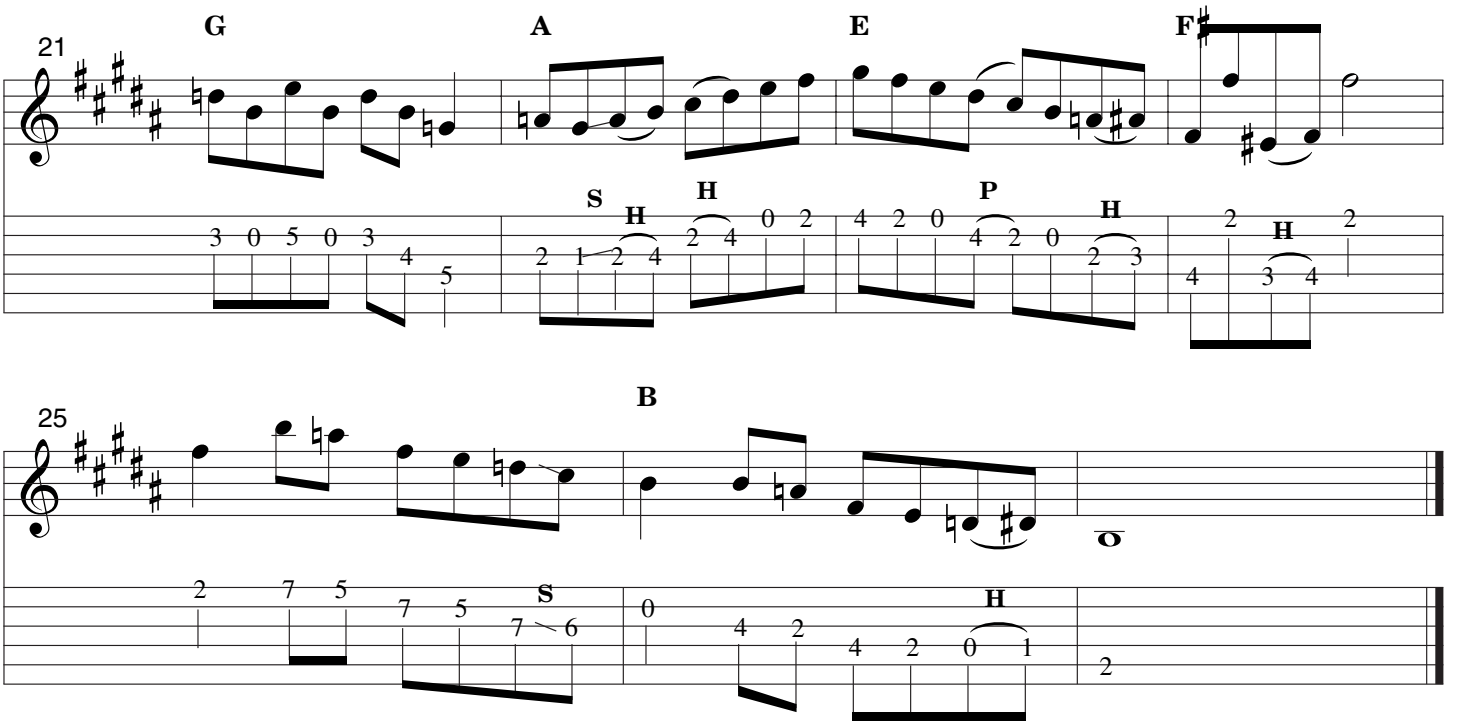
Laramie Divorce

Arranged by John McGann

Laramie Divorce (con't)



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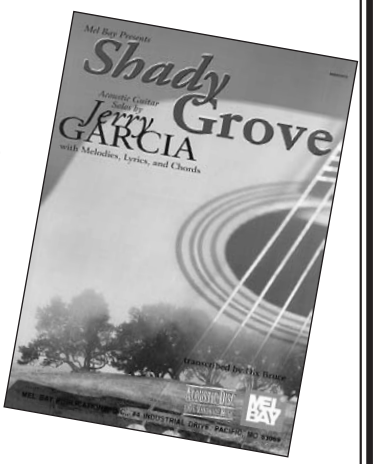

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New Release Highlight
Bill Henry: *Red Sky*

by Dan Miller

Having published *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* for six years, one of the things that pleasantly surprises me is the wide variety of musical tastes that flatpickers embrace. Although some cling tightly to bluegrass and fiddle tunes, most of our readers welcome anything from acoustic rock, to swing, country, Celtic, classical, jazz, blues and folk. We continuously receive requests from subscribers who are fans of all musical genres. The acoustic guitar is incredibly versatile, and the exploration of its possibilities has led all of us to journey down a variety of musical paths.

Red Sky, the new solo release from Northern Lights' guitarist Bill Henry, is a great example of the various paths a flatpicker can wander, and portrays the musical journey Bill has taken over the past thirty years. Bill's guitar journey began in the early 1970s with the music of folk and rock icons like Eric Clapton, the Allman Brothers, Bob Dylan and James Taylor. Bill looks back to those years by leading off Red Sky with the James Taylor/Jimmy Buffet/Tim Mayer song "Sugar Trade." This song also introduces a nautical theme that reoccurs in tunes like Bob Emery's "Red Sky" (cut 3) and Bill's own "Fisherman's Lament" (cut 6). Having grown up in the town of Mystic, CT, Bill felt inspired to pay tribute to his seaport roots. Both "Red Sky" and "Fisherman's Lament" are also presented in a folk style, where Bill effectively blends piano, pedal steel, and percussion with his acoustic guitar. "Fisherman's Lament" features Jonathan Edwards on harmony vocals and harmonica.

When Bill was in high school a friend, Gary Mehalick, introduced him to Doc Watson. Doc's playing inspired Bill to learn how to flatpick the guitar. Bill says, "I was not listening to much bluegrass. I was mainly into Doc and fiddle tunes." Bill's folk and rock background led him to finding bands like the Earl Scruggs Revue and Old & In The Way before discovering any of the more traditional bluegrass players. Bill lists Tony Rice, Dan Crary

and Norman Blake as big influences on his guitar style. The second cut on *Red Sky* ("Cattle In The Cane/Early Morning Riser") and the fourth ("Sweet Georgia Brown") pay tribute to the flatpickers who have influenced Bill throughout his career. "Sweet Georgia Brown" gives a big nod to Doc and features Vassar Clements on fiddle. The "Cattle In The Cane" medley features Sam Bush on mandolin.

From 1974 through 1979 Bill played in a number of different bands. He describes the music he played during that period as "a folky eclectic mix." He says the bands played everything from Hank Williams, Sr. to Doc Watson fiddle tunes and Irish Celtic music. Bill pays tribute to the Irish music he played during this period of his life on cuts 5 and 7 of the CD ("Highland Wedding/Rocky Mountain Goat," and "Hippodrome Reel" respectively). Bill picks both electric and acoustic guitars on these cuts. The "Highland Wedding/Rocky Mountain Goat" medley features John Mock on penny whistle and low whistle and Tim O'Brien on fiddle.

Prior to 1981, Bill had had no formal instruction on the guitar. He says his learning process consisted of holing up in a room with a turntable and learning Doc Watson solos by ear. Wishing to expand his musical horizons, Bill entered the Berklee College of Music in Boston, MA, in 1981. Although he only stayed for one year, Bill says the experience was very fruitful for him musically. He learned the basics of music theory, sight-reading, chord voicings, and ear training. Bill says, "the theory didn't hurt but my improvement during that year was mainly due to the fact that I was being exposed to a lot of different players and I was playing music all of the time."

Bill left Berklee after one year due to the financial hardship of trying to support himself and attend school simultaneously. However, from 1981 through 1985 he stayed in Boston and lived in a house full of musicians (*Flatpicking Guitar* columnist Orrin Star being one of them). Not only did the house boast a talented group of resident musicians, but many musicians who were traveling through Boston would come by the house and pick. Among others, Bill lists Tony Rice, Tim O'Brien, John McGann, David Bromberg, Russ Barenberg and the members of Riders in the Sky. The exposure to this large musical diversity during his years in Boston is expressed on cut 8 of *Red Sky*. "Ray of Hope" is an instrumental penned by Bill that features his acoustic guitar swapping solos with Steve Hunt's piano and Pete Levesque's tenor saxophone. During the first seven cuts of the recording we experience Bill as a folky singer and fiddle tune flatpicker. With this acoustic jazz number, Bill shows us a whole new side to his guitar playing abilities. This tune is more contemporary than any preceding it.

On cut 9 Bill returns to his folk stylings with Dan Fogelberg's "Run For the Roses," before leading us off in another direction with the last cut "Jazz'N." During the years Bill lived in Boston, he spent time playing in a swing band. Bill expresses the jazz/swing side of his musical talent with this original tune. He pulls out all the stops on this one by bringing in electric piano and organ, tenor saxophone, percussion, and djembe to accompany his acoustic and electric guitars.

Bill's guitar work is clean, tasteful, and original throughout. His picking displays power and confidence. His singing voice is appealing. After hearing his voice, it was no surprise that he chose to sing a James

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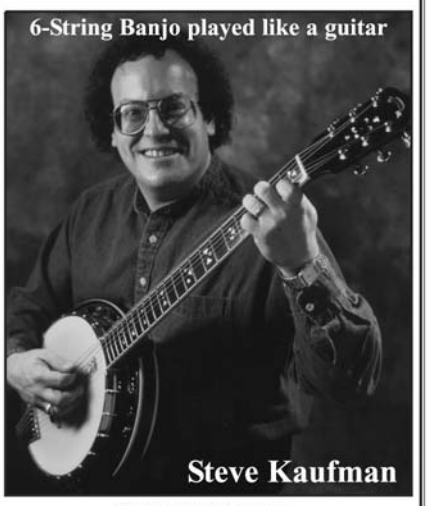
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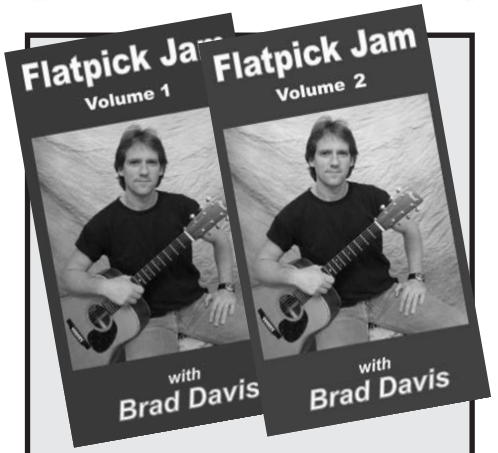

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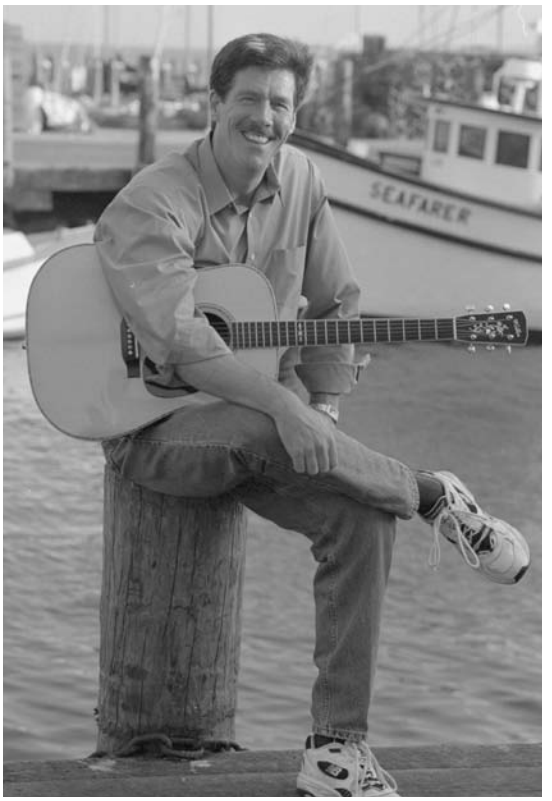


Taylor tune and a Dan Fogelberg tune because I would place his singing voice range and style as somewhat of a cross between Taylor and Fogelberg.

Red Sky is Bill Henry's first solo outing. He's also appeared on Orrin Starr's *Fun Songs and Fancy Picking*, Marty Cutler's *Charged Particles* and the Northern Lights band projects. Bill says, "In the band, I am just one fourth of the decision making process when it comes to song selections, arrangements, etc. On this record I got to call all of the shots from the song selection to the arrangements, and I wanted to play music that the band doesn't do. I like flatpicking, Irish music, folk music, and jazzy stuff. I wanted to cover all of the music that I like, so this recording represents where I lean musically. It is a snapshot of what I like."

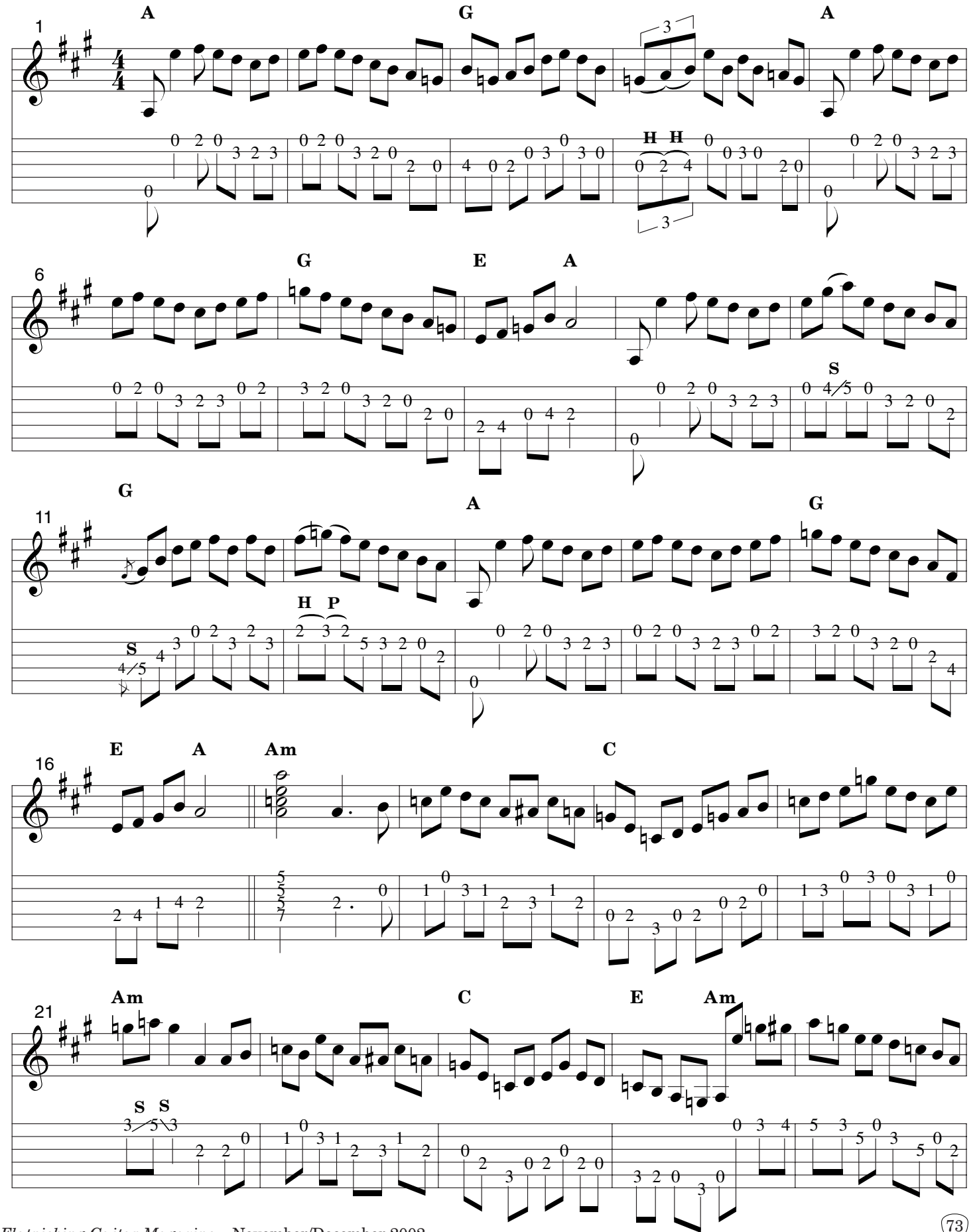
Bill's main musical gig since 1981 has been with the band Northern Lights. In 1986, the band placed third in the Kentucky Fried Chicken Best New Bluegrass Band competition in Louisville, Kentucky. On the strength of their third recording *On The Edge*, they were asked to showcase at the IBMA World of Bluegrass Convention in 1987, and they have perform on and off with Peter Rowan in 1989. In May of 1990 the band released *Take You To The Sky*, a recording on the Flying Fish label. Two of the songs on this recording soared to the top five of *Bluegrass Unlimited* magazine's National Bluegrass Survey. One of those songs, "Northern Rail," remained on the chart for nearly a year. The other song, "Winterhawk," was nominated for Song of the Year by members of the IBMA. The band's second Flying Fish release, *Can't Buy Your Way*, was released in March 1992 and spent eight months on the National Bluegrass Survey (two months at the number three spot). Since 1992 the band has continued to perform and record. They have released a total of six CDs (including 2000's *Three August Nights*, live performance with Vassar Clements) and they still play 40 plus gigs a year. You can find out more about the bands schedule and recordings at Northernlightsband.com.

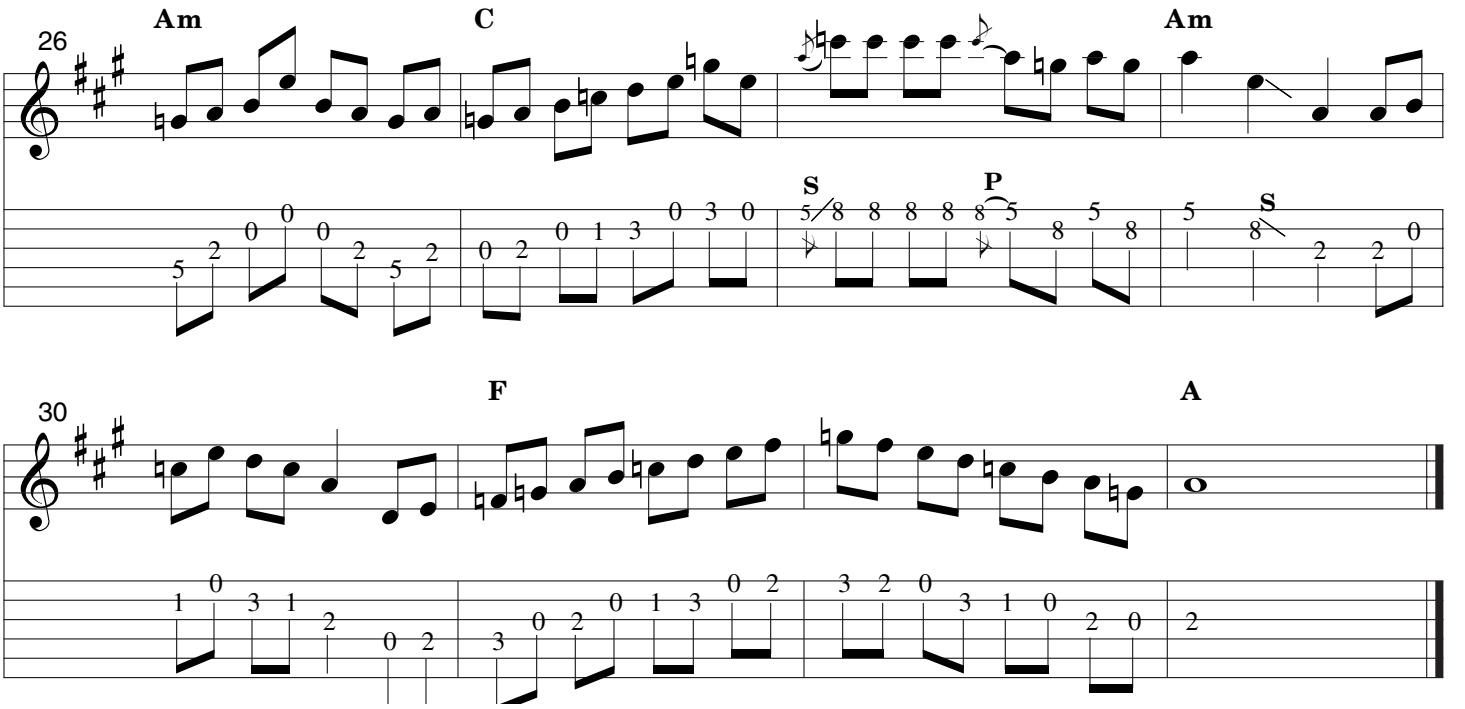
Although Northern Lights started out as a "progressive bluegrass band" in 1975 and have continued to become more progressive over the years, they are still labeled as a bluegrass band. Bill's departure from that format on his solo record was a chance to stretch his musical muscles a bit and show the world the diversity of his talent. He says he spent a long time with the arrangements on this recording, and he added top-notch players like Tim O'Brien, Vassar Clements, Sam Bush, and Jonathan Edwards to appear with him. It is an outstanding recording.

On this project Bill has provided a small sample of his music talents in the flatpicking, folk, acoustic jazz, Celtic, and swing genres. He displays his eclectic taste and his ability to play the guitar well in numerous musical settings. If your taste is eclectic and, like Bill, your musical journey has led you down a number of paths, then you will appreciate and greatly enjoy this record.

Red Sky was released on June 11th of this year by OMS Records (www.omsrecords.com). On the following page we provide you with a transcription of Bill's first guitar solo from "Cattle in the Cane."

Cattle In the Cane

Arranged by Bill Henry
Transcribed by Brad Davis

Cattle In The Cane (con't)



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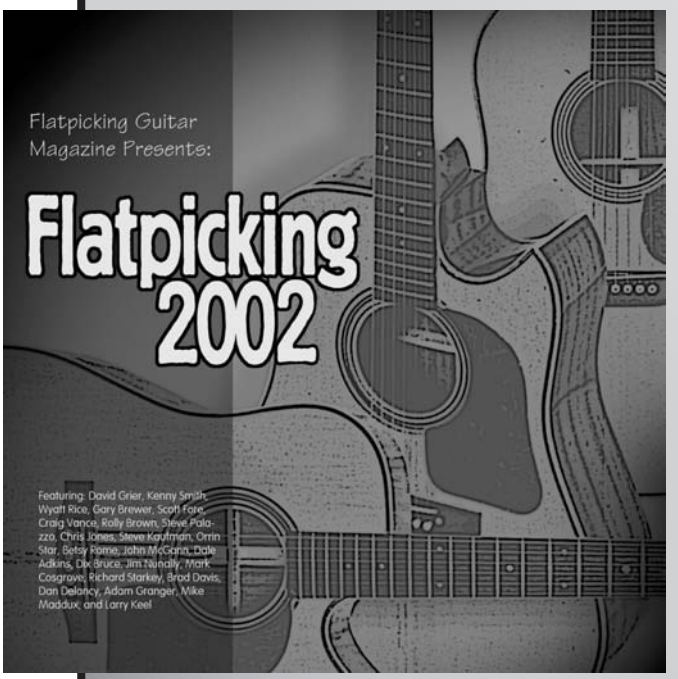
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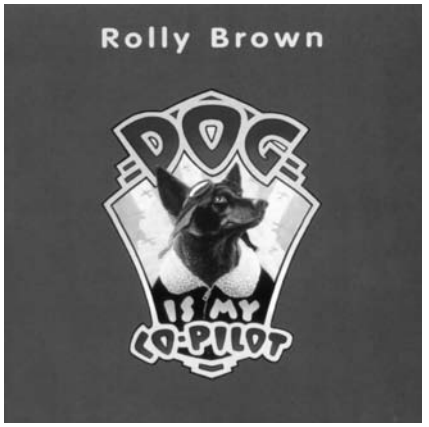
Reviews

Rolly Brown: *Dog Is My Co-Pilot*



Reviewed by David McCarty

Tai Chi master. Skilled acupuncturist. National Fingerstyle Guitar Champion. Kaufman Kamp instructor. Aussie dog fancier. Flatpicker of renown. These are just a few of the hats worn by Rolly Brown, well-known to members of the FLATPICK-L list and numerous guitar workshops for his insightful, well-informed opinions and advice on making great guitar music. On his new solo CD, Rolly splits his time between flatpicking and fingerstyle guitar instrumentals, and a handful of nice vocal tunes, to create an exceptionally engaging, always musical experience that's certain to win him many new fans.

Despite the occasional bias among flatpickers against those of the fingerstyle persuasion, this style of guitar offers much those of us hewing to the plectral side of the road could learn from, including exceptional dynamic range, broad harmonic expression and the ability to express a full spectrum of musical emotion. And Rolly is, in a word, a master at all these. His great arrangement of "Waltzing Matilda," while not as bombastic as Tommy Emmanuel's version, perfectly captures why this haunting melody has bubbled to the surface of, as he puts it, our "collective consciousness."

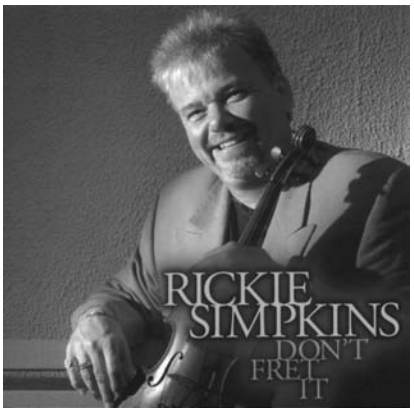
Although not what many listeners would consider a great vocalist, Rolly's singing style is warm and effective, and more importantly, he knows how to deliver a lyric to maximum effect. His original tune, "On Devil's River," eerily conveys the haunting possibility of an infant girl raised by wolves. "Drunk on the Moon," "Across The Great Divide" and "Like I Used To Do" also are standouts for Rolly's vocals.

And what of the flatpickers? Well, fear not, we get a little of everything here. There's Rolly's original tune, "Rolling Thunder" with cohort Mark Cosgrove (see this month's cover for more on Mark), and the jazz stylings of "There Is No Greater Love" and "Sweet Sue" with jazz great John Carlini. Rolly and Mark also put together inspiring flatpicked versions of "Forked Deer" and "Redwing."

Excellently recorded and nicely packaged, *Dog Is My Co-Pilot* is like all things Rolly does: well conceived, superbly executed and the best it can be. For more details, check out Rolly's website, www.rollybrown.com.

Song list: The Bedouin; On Devil's River; Rolling Thunder; Waltzing Matilda; Drunk On The Moon; There Is No Greater Love; Forked Deer; Across The Great Divide; The Phantom's Lullaby; Sweet Sue; Like I Used To Do; Keliology; My Uncle Walter; Redwing; Resurrection

Rickie Simpkins: *Don't Fret It* Doobie Shea Studios DSCD-2006



Reviewed by Bryan Kimsey

After my first listening to Rickie Simpkin's *Don't Fret It*, I didn't think this was as strong of an outing as his first solo CD *Dancing on the Fingerboard*. You know the joke: "It was love at first sight. Then I looked again." Well, I listened again, and I was wrong. *Don't Fret It* might be an even stronger CD, but in a different way. *Dancing* seemed to be more of an extension of the Tony Rice Unit (with which Rickie plays), and *Don't Fret It* is more of a true solo recording. Simpkins does almost all the lead vocals, and all the mandolin and fiddle work, and even some banjo playing (yikes!). Thus, we get a big dose of Rickie Simpkins as a complete musician. Bass is handled by brother Ronnie, and Randy Kohrs plays dobro on several cuts.

Of interest to us flatpickers is the presence of the Rice Brothers, Tony and Wyatt. Of special interest is the fact that Wyatt plays alone on several cuts and as a result, we get some excellent Wyatt Rice leads. Even better, the instrumentation is fairly sparse with just 3 or 4 players and Wyatt's rhythm really gets a chance to shine. And what a great rhythm player Wyatt Rice is! He manages to fill the spaces, drive the rhythm section, and yet not be obtrusive, all at the same time. He's got that elusive percussive sound, too. Just listen to him on "Golden Slippers" and you'll see what I mean. Good stuff! Brother Tony takes several leads, and they're classic Tony Rice, varying from the jazzy breaks on "Old Tree" to his fluid fiddle tune style on "Stoney Lonesome." Still, for me, it's the chance to hear Wyatt Rice play that really makes this CD for me. His breaks on his own "Waltz for Reannon," "I'm Not a Miner," "Golden Slippers," and "Black Mountain Rag" are reason enough to get this CD. Wyatt plays the melody close to the chest, has great tone, crosspicks a lot, and that's what I like.

I know this is a short review, but I've found that the better the album, the harder it is to say something about it. "Excellent CD, Get It", should just about say it all! It may not have love at first sight, but after the 10th listening, we're still together.

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Chris Jones
A Few Words
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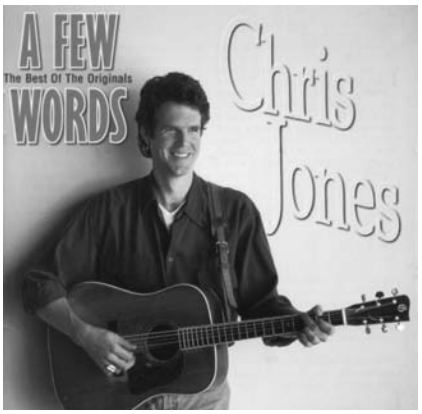


Reviewed by Bryan Kimsey

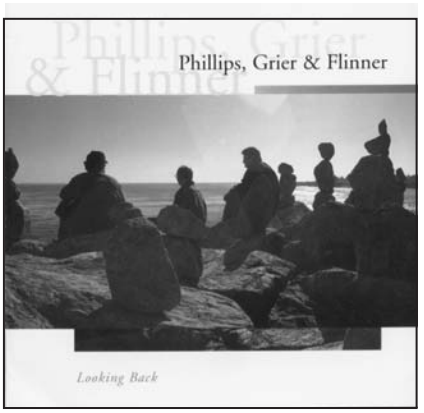
A Few Words is Chris Jones' latest release and it's a "Greatest Hits" of sorts, being that all but three of these songs have been previously released. What's unique about this collection is that Chris wrote all the tunes, thus the subtitle "The Best of The Originals." It's a good collection of tunes, all played with Jones' solid rhythm guitar, "Low Lonesome" voice, and the occasional punchy lead guitar. The guests include a huge roster of players from Barry Bales to Mike Compton to Dave Talbot, with Dan Tyminsky, Darrin Vincent, Aubrey Haynie, and many more in-between. It's solid bluegrass all the way through. I like the fact that they lyrics are included in the liner notes—that always makes it so much easier to figure out the song and eliminates the dreaded, but interesting, mondegreen.

This is not a guitar album per se, but is an album showcasing Chris Jones' songwriting and singing. Even so, flatpickers will find much to like here, starting with Jones' already mentioned solid rhythm playing. There's enough lead flatpicking for newcomers to see why Chris writes a column for *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*. In fact, there's even an instrumental in "Wit's End," with Brad Davis. Chris has powerful tone, always keeping the melody in sight. I'd like to play like him when I grow up. I'll never write songs like him, no way. He's got some good ones here, too, with "Witness" being my favorite, but they're all well-written, melodic songs.

If you already have Chris' CD's, you might not think you need this one, but if you're looking for "The Best of The Originals," *A Few Words* should be your first stop. It would also make a great Christmas, wedding, first (and second, third, etc.) childbirth, anniversary, spring/fall/winter/summer, birthday, or Day of The Week present for all of your friends. Keep a copy near all your CD players. Pick up dozens of copies and help push Chris Jones' income all the way into the upper 5 digits! It's a good album.

Song List: Dark Wind Of Missouri, Bridge To Portsmouth, A Few Words, Uphill Climb, Stream Of Love, Nelson And The Mountains, Heartaches To Forget, Alone With You, Just A Town, Wit's End, Model Prisoner, Too Far Down The Road, Blinded By The Rose, Fork In The Road, No One But You, Witness

Phillips, Grier & Flinner
Looking Back
Compass Records 7 4342 2



Reviewed by
Christopher Thiessen

Is it logical to assume that if we're experiencing a new "Golden Age of Lutherie" that, correspondingly, there must be a new "Golden Age of Acoustic Music" to accompany it? It seems reasonable: why else would all these incredible luthiers (like Lawrence Smart, or Lynn Dudenbostel, or Michael Hornick, profiled elsewhere in this issue) have multi-year waiting lists? Somebody must be playing the music to drive these instruments, right?

Exactly. In 1999, Todd Phillips, David Grier and Matt Flinner put out their first CD, *Phillips Grier & Flinner*. Every cut was an original composition. Three years later we have their second CD, *Looking Back*. And even though not one cut is an original composition, that doesn't matter at all.

If you saw this CD at your local book & music emporium, you might quickly scan the titles and then be tempted to put it back. "Nothing original here," you might think. You'd be wrong. Todd, David and Matt may be looking historically backwards for tunes, but they've put their inimitable stamp on each cut, rendering it anew with their performance.

The trio's genius rests in the ability to transport us to another place, where fusing both the expected and the unexpected into something amazing seems absolutely normal. On "Tennessee Blues" (the CD's opening cut), Flinner and Grier—both masters at switching between rhythm and lead—dance with the familiar melody, playing with timing and syncopation so that the tune is hauntingly apparent but disturbingly fresh. Meanwhile Phillips' bass line is alternately reacting to, reinforcing, and then becoming a catalyst for this musical play. Now typically all that musicality is thrown in your face, but remember: we're in another place, where folks this good don't need to shout their proficiency. They just play. And we get to listen.

Second cut: "Monroe's Hornpipe" followed by "I Am A Pilgrim." Again, quietly understated brilliance. And then right after these familiar bluegrass favorites are two "new acoustic music" tunes, "Afro Blue" and "Search for Peace"; perhaps more pensive, but not out of line. And then the guys swing immediately back in really familiar ground with "Dixie Hoedown" followed by "Old Dangerfield" (which has some remarkable unison work). But just as you're getting comfortable, "Little Wing" drops into the mix. But this cannot be the Hendrix tune, you say. It most certainly is, but given an entirely new vitality in an acoustic version. And finally an equally tasteful acoustic version of the Beatles' "I Want You (She's So Heavy)" closes the CD. (Well, almost. There's a tenth tune, but you can discover that for yourself.) If I have a complaint about this CD, it doesn't rest with Phillips, Grier or Flinner: I just never liked the way "I Want You" goes on and on and then just stops. But perhaps there is method even in this madness.

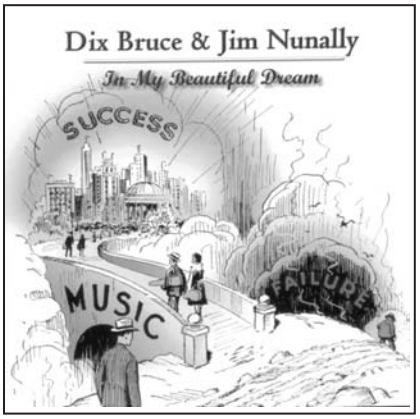
With *Looking Back* we experience a crafted CD album (rather than a standard tune collection), where each tune has been carefully selected and sequenced to move us willingly along a specific musical spectrum in a little more than 50 minutes. It is a spectrum well worth experiencing.

The recording quality is a major contributor to this musical conspiracy. The intimate quality of the recording enhances the illusion that you've dropped by Todd's house after dinner one night when Matt and David were over to play, and you get to eavesdrop as these guys play the music they love to play! (In fact, if you remember the cover shot on *Phillips Grier & Flinner*, it sounds like you've got a great seat over by the fire). But should we expect any less when Todd Phillips is producer?

The mix is this: clever intertwining of tunes to span bluegrass, new age, and rock categories; brilliant musicianship that is presented simply without fanfare; and a low-key, intimate setting. (And I'm not even going to talk specifics about David's guitar playing—which is, as you might expect, just flat-out amazing). Remember, we're in that place where the amazing is normal. And once again Phillips, Grier & Flinner deliver. Period.

Song List: Tennessee Blues; Monroe's Hornpipe; I Am A Pilgrim; Afro Blue; Search for Peace; Dixie Hoedown; Old Dangerfield; Little Wing; I Want You (She's So Heavy)

Dix Bruce & Jim Nunally
In My Beautiful Dream
Musix CD-106

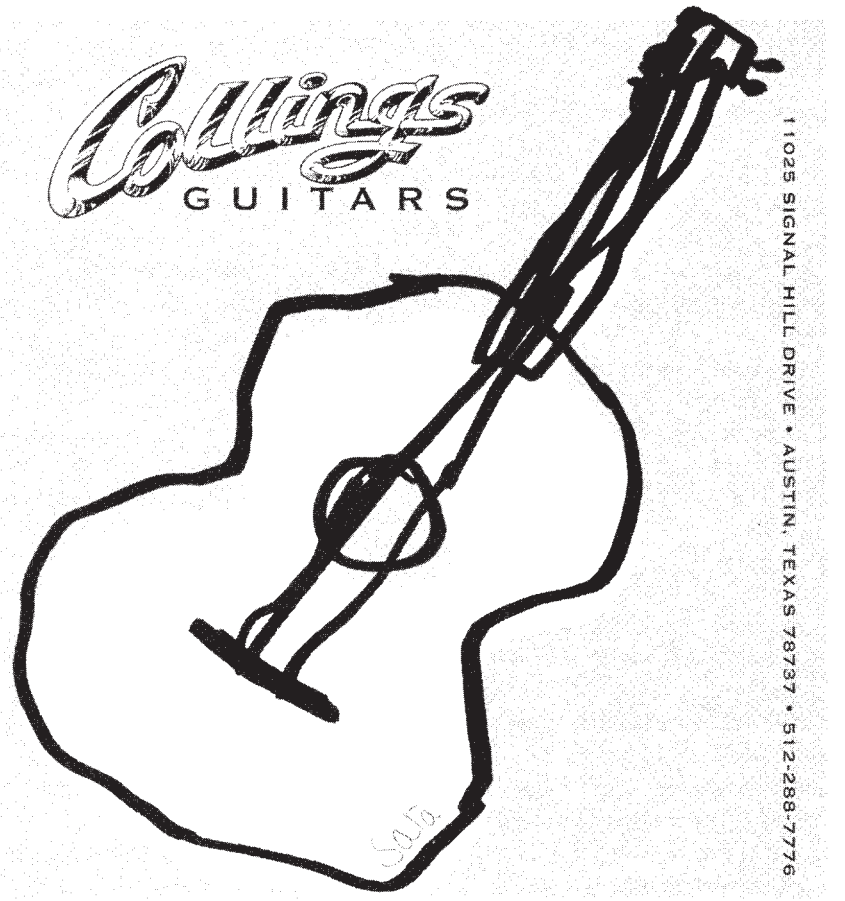


Reviewed by
Christopher Thiessen

In many ways, the duet—especially in the style of the great brother duets of the early 20th century—is an incredibly difficult art form. It must appear deceptively simple in order to work well. Two voices and two instruments need to provide an ensemble of sound. And Dix Bruce and Jim Nunnally honor well the legacy of the Monroes, the Delmores, the Bolicks, the Louvins, the Wilmores, and many others. Both Bruce and Nunally play recognizable, clean melody lines that augment the tunes they've selected. And like their guitar playing, their vocals are tight, straight-forward, and from the heart.

In My Beautiful Dream, the third Bruce-Nunally project, presents four original tunes from both Dix and Jim, with four others rounding out the dozen cuts on the CD. The original tunes often focus on the aftermath of love gone wrong or astray, but the duo's greatest strength occurs when they have the opportunity to sing and play a ballad. "Hillbilly Boy" relates the struggles of Dust Bowl migrants in California, while their rendition of the Dylan tune "North Country Blues" provides a gritty view into the demise of a town based on a dying iron ore mine. Those tunes balance against the light-hearted "I Told Them All About You" (for which Dix wrote a great second verse) and the acoustic version of Chuck Berry's rock 'n' roll classic, "You Can't Catch Me."

As a flatpicker, I appreciate the apparent simplicity of the solos Bruce and Nunally play: what sounds easy to play and fits elegantly into a tune results only from a great deal of practice and selection. Listen to the guitar work underneath the Louvin Brothers' "My Baby's Gone" or "Gonna Walk" or "Hillbilly Boy." In fact, you may want to look again at the last issue of *FGM* (September/October 2002): Dix Bruce tabs out his intro and solo to "I Told Them All About You." There's enough in the simple pattern of notes to keep anyone busy practicing for quite a while.



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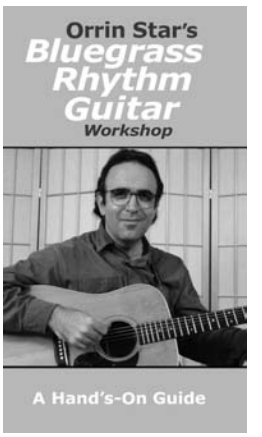
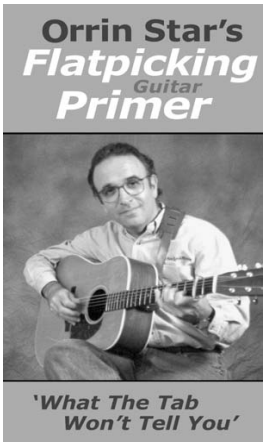


Powerful Rhythm



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Then I met this guy at a festival. We were doing a little shade-tree picking, & he was singing wonderfully. When we finished "Will the Circle Be Unbroken," he asked me why I didn't join in on harmony.

"I can't harmonize," I said. "I didn't want to mess up your singing by sounding like a bullfrog in heat."

"Sure you can harmonize! Why, I'd even give you this guitar if I can't teach you right now how to do the tenor harmony!"

Well, he had me singing a good tenor harmony so easily I just couldn't believe it. Singing harmony was a skill, not a big mystery!

"How did you learn to teach harmony like that?"

"It's not hard," he replied. "let me loan you my CDs, and you'll see my secret."

He handed me a CD pack entitled "How To Sing Bluegrass Harmony." I never bought a mial-order course. I just couldn't thrust I'd get good instruction from something I couldn't try out right away.

He told me, "This course came with a guarantee...if I didn't think it was good within 10 days, I'd get my money back. And it couldn't hurt to try it with a guarantee!"

"But you could sing harmony a little, so you could learn quicker--"

"nope! I sang harmonhy like a bullfrog in heat, too!"

We laughed, and he left me with a cheerful, "Try those tapes out."

Well, I played that course all the way home in my car, and I sang til I was hoarse. I sure felt like I was learning... but the real test was yet to come.

Next Tuesday I met with my pickin" buddies, like I always do. Just before we started "Fox On The Run," I told my friends I was going to sing harmony. They all laughed (I knew they would), and Charlie cracked, "What kind of harmony? Froggy tenor?"

"Let's just do it," Isaid. "I got a surprise for you boys."

They kept giggling, but you should've seen their faces when I started singing harmony. They were amazed. Charlie even accused me of getting 'harmony surgery.' Naturally, they all wanted to learn my secret. I just smiled, and said "Harmony singing is a skill as much as a gift. And this course got me working my skill the right way."

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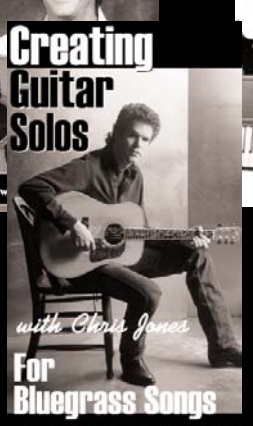

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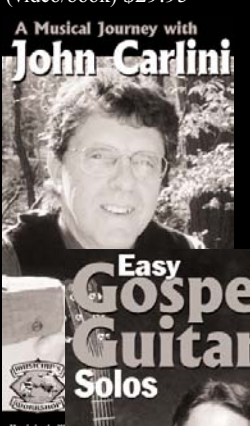

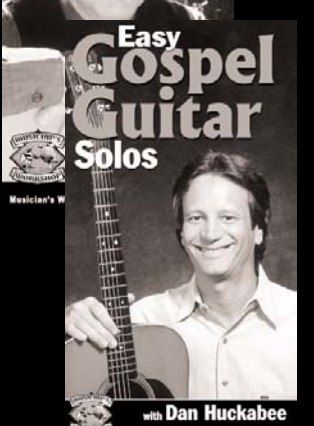

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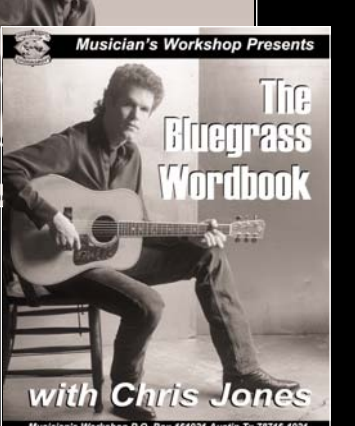

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OH FREEDOM, OH FREEDOM
OH FREEDOM OVER ME!
AND BEFORE I'LL BE A SLAVE
I'LL BE BURIED IN MY GRAVE
AND GO HOME TO MY LORD AND BE FREE.

– performed on a 12-fret model to open the March on Washington, August 28, 1963

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